COUNTER-ENTHUSIASMS: THE RATIONALIZATION OF FALSE PROPHECY IN EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT ENGLAND

By William Cook Miller

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the historical problem of false prophecy—or, more generally, the need to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate forms of contact with the divine—as it influences then-innovative and now-pervasive attitudes toward language and knowledge in early enlightenment England. Against the prevalent senses that the history of popular religion can be characterized either in terms of false consciousness or disenchantment, I argue that the vernacular Bible empowered unauthorized subjects (the poor, women, heterodox thinkers) to challenge dominant English culture in the theological vocabulary of the prophet. This power led to a reaction—which I call counter-enthusiasm—which both polemicized popular prophets as "enthusiasts" beyond the reach of reason, and developed new categorical understandings of experience in order to redefine relations of spirit, body, and word so as to avoid the problem of unlicensed spiritual authority. I concentrate on three counter-enthusiasms—as articulated by Henry More, John Locke, and Jonathan Swift—which fundamentally rethink the links between humanity, divinity, and language, in light of--and in the ironically occupied guise of—the figure of the enthusiast. I argue further that the discourse of enthusiasm contributed centrally to the process known as "the rationalization of society," which involved the distinction of the categories of self, society, and nature.

KEYWORDS: prophecy, enthusiasm, rationalization, enlightenment, language theory, religion, mimesis, hermeneutics, materialism, totality, irony, satire, English Civil War, Interregnum, Restoration, Henry More, Cambridge Platonism, John Locke, Jonathan Swift, Jürgen Habermas.

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This project began with a remark by Frances Ferguson. In a seminar during my first semester at Johns Hopkins, she observed that the rise of the novel might be explained in terms of a cultural transition from prophecy to prediction. This sentence caught so many of my interests at once—including some I did not recognize as mine until that moment—that I knew I had to write about it. I never made it to prediction, or to the rise of the novel, but I owe the impetus of this account of prophecy to Frances, and wish to express my gratitude for that and the many other insights into history and language that she has shared. Here's to more!

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I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTS

1. PROPHECY AND RATIONALIZATION

> And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. (Exodus 7.1)[1]

1. Prophet Hunt

On May 7, 1640, a lay preacher named James Hunt appeared before the Court of the High Commission—the supreme Ecclesiastical court in England from its founding under Henry VIII until its violent dissolution in 1641 in the first throes of the English Civil Wars. Prophet Hunt, as he was known, was described by his arresting officer as "a fanatiq, frantiq person … a husbandman, & alltogether illiterate … [who] tooke upon him to … preach and expound the Scriptures, & was lately taken absurdly preaching on a stone in Paulls Churchyard."[2] The court sentenced Hunt to an indefinite term in Bridewell. Within the year he was out again preaching, and now publishing unlicensed sermons, starting with *The Sermon and Prophecie* of 1641, which (according to its subtitle) "hee hath endeavoured to deliver in most churches in and about London, but since delivered in the Old-Baily."[3]

Prophet Hunt's many accusers habitually emphasize his ludicrous insignificance: his low birth, his illiteracy (which only meant that, like most academics today, he didn't know Latin and Greek), and (as one contemporary puts it) "the weake madnesse of his giddy-braine."[4] But these accusations of weakness confess the opposite. Hunt—and many religious dissidents like him—had tremendous power at his disposal, and this power was expressly decoupled from traditional

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[1] I cite the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) throughout, unless otherwise noted. Specifically, I use *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[2] Ian L. O'Neill, "Hunt, James (*bap.* 1591?, *d.* 1649x66)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74524, accessed 12 March 2015] Subsequent uses of this resource cited as *DNB*.

[3] James Hunt, *The sermon and prophecie of Mr. James Hunt of the county of Kent. Who professeth himselfe a prophet, which hee hath endeavoured to deliver in most churches in and about London, but since delivered in the Old-Baily* (1641). Accessed using *Early English Books Online*. Subsequent uses of this database – which has proved invaluable for this project – cited as *EEBO*.

[4] O'Neill, "Hunt, James," *DNB*.

politics and learning. When the Mayor of London, Richard Gurney, asked Hunt in a heated interrogation "how he dare presume to preach having no warrant for the Ministeriall function," Hunt declared "he had sufficient warrant from God, for he knew that he was his Messenger."[5] He was, in brief, a prophet—and thus that weak vessel, his body, was lifted up by God to the lofty task of reforming England and preparing the way for the Kingdom of God. This is a central motif of Biblical prophecy—apparent, for example, in the well-known cadences from Isaiah, later echoed in Luke: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."[6] Hunt's writings are full of celebrations of the strength of his apparent weakness, framed in the institutional vocabulary of his particular historical moment. Hunt writes: "For you have so many false doctrines rais'd, / By your Latine tongue and Greeke phrase, / That now I trust in our glorious God, / The plaine English tongue will win the praise. / […] / For the deepest scholler in Cambridge Schoole, / May be taught wisdom by Christs foole."[7] For Hunt, church, state, and school were institutions of the dead letter, conducted in dead languages. His own body, moved by the spirit of God, vocalizing in "the plaine English tongue," was better fitted to give life to the sacred word. He was a living sign of a new dispensation of spirit.

So this is what made this self-proclaimed fool of Christ, and others like him, at once such a laughing-stock and such a threat. This is what made his doggerel bark. This study begins with the simple observation that the rhetorical power of unlicensed preaching stems—as Hunt's nickname suggests—from the self-authorized assumption of the role of prophet. This title signals an attempt to appeal to other human beings through a language touched and licensed by God,

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[5] *An order from the high court of parliament, which was read on Sunday last, in every church, being the 19 day of December, 1641.* Cited in O'Neill, "Hunt, James," *DNB.*

[6] Isaiah 40.4; Luke 3.5.

[7] James Hunt, *The spirituall verses and prose of James Hunt concerning the advancment of Christ his glorious and triumphing church: which by degrees shall flourish over the face of the whole world, which will be to the overthrow of the Divill, and the false church* (1643). *EEBO.*

and so to bypass the hierarchies of church and state which traditionally mediate between ordinary humans and the divine. Prophet Hunt thus practiced a radical form of communication—one which draws upon the institutional authority of the scriptures (that is, the power to institute power) while evading the institutional authority of church and state. He wished not merely to understand others and be understood. He wished to express and impart, through the newly spiritualized vernacular tongue, the divine authority necessary to alter common human reality.

A closer look at Hunt's language might sharpen this point. Hunt writes: "Again, take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, the sword I understand and prove, that it signifieth Christ and his word, for in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, Christ is the word, and Christ was with God, and Christ is God, for the word of God is quick and powerfull, and sharper then any two edged sword."[8] Consider the variety of Biblical reference in this passage. Of course there's the well-known opening of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." At the same time, he echoes Ephesians 6.17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." And Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." The force of this language belongs not to Hunt, but (for early modern ears and eyes) to the apostles St. John and St. Paul, and beyond them to God. Thus he participates in a prophetic chain of resonances. He has become a prophet of prophets. And he invites his listeners and readers to do likewise—to draw power from these Biblical phrases and thus to reinvigorate the spiritual state of England. Prophecy, in Hunt's view, is not just radically connected to God through history's long chamber of sacred voices—what's more, its power is communicable in the present.

[8] Hunt, *Spiritual Verses*, 14.

Hunt's interpretation of prophecy was by no means idiosyncratic. He knew, as virtually everyone at the time knew, that prophecy was more than one theological feature among many, on equal footing with particular practices like infant baptism, doctrinal beliefs like the substantial nature of the Eucharistic host, or other forms of verbal divine-human contact like prayer. These were all particular contents carried in this one sacred vessel of revelation. They were only known because knowledge of them has been relayed from God to humans by a prophetic vessel. A 1583 translation of the commonplaces of Peter Martyr Vermigli, an Italian convert to Protestantism whose writings greatly influenced the early English Reformation, defines prophecy as "a faculty given unto certain men by the spirit of God … whereby they are able certainly to know things heavenly, high, and secret, and to open the same unto others for edifying of the church."[9] Prophecy, then, was about much more than the prediction of the future. It was about the theorization of the means of communication between immanence—this world—and transcendence—the next—in order to edify the world. It was about, in the words of the astrologer and physician Richard Saunders, "a manifesting by divine inspiration, of hidden or secret things, whether past, present, or to come."[10] It was about talking to God. Indeed, the prophet's knowledge of past, present, and future things relied on the notion that God, the author of time and being, had shared with them some small part of his omniscience, either directly (as happened to Moses, with whom God communicated "face to face") or through one of his angels (as happened to the rest of the prophets).[11] As Aquinas writes, "The future cannot be known in itself save by God alone; to Whom even that is present which in the course of events is future, forasmuch as from eternity His glance embraces the whole course of time."[12] The prophet shared and reflected for the wider community, for the transcendent moments during which he

[9] Pietro Martire Vermigli, *The common places of the most famous and renowned divine Doctor Peter Martyr*, trans. and ed. Anthony Marten, (London, 1583), 19. *EEBO*.
[10] Richard Saunders, *A balm to heal religions wounds applied in a serious advice to sober-minded Christians that love the truth, and are well-wishers to reformation* (London, 1652), 100. *EEBO*.
[11] Exodus 33.11.
[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicæ* 1.86.4, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, second edition (1920). Accessed at http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.html, July 28, 2014.

participated in the divine message, this eternal glance. Thus the prophetic word, for the early modern centuries, bore the truth that saved or damned every human soul. Its importance for human self-understanding at every level, and at every level all at once, was immeasurable.

Obviously, given the role of prophecy in mediating between everyday appearances and "things heavenly, high, and secret," the theological-political importance of distinguishing between true and false prophecy long predates the seventeenth century. One finds it implicitly in Moses' encounter with the magicians in Pharaoh's court (Ex. 7.22).[13] It is codified in Deuteronomy, where Moses proposes a pair of logic gates for determining true prophets. The first gate, the hardest, is doctrinal—true prophets must be of our religion (Deut. 13.1-3); the second gate, is, one might say, scientific—they must actually be correct in their predictions (Deut. 18.22). This Mosaic standard remained in place into the early modern era.[14] Doctrinal conformity preceded natural philosophical evidence. In other words, the monopoly on revelation was interpreted by way of a monopoly on doctrine. Prophets who rose up—as many did—and articulated theological positions that were not orthodox, could be dismissed regardless of their scientific talents, predictions, or miracles. Likewise prophets who rose up in the church's name but failed to predict events or perform miracles could be dismissed either as lamentably delusional or blasphemously ambitious.[15]

Prophet Hunt is called both of these things. But this does not stop him. Indeed, the accusations and persecutions leveled from "Cambridge Schoole" help legitimate him. His example raises a difficult question: how does one handle prophets who rise up during a time when there is no really existing monopoly on doctrine—when the articles of the established

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[13] Simon During emphasizes the cultural importance of this encounter in *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4-7.

[14] For an extended study of the influence of Mosaic Law on early modern politics, see Graham Hammill, *The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), passim.

[15] For a particularly useful studies of medieval heresy, false prophecy, and the meaning of medieval belief, see Steven Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?" *Representations* 103.1 (2008): 1-29.

church have been suspended? Who decides then which logic gates count in determining the provenance of prophetic speech, and in which order? Prophet Hunt's assumption of this power was obviously a political problem for his moment—most immediately because Hunt and many others like him used scriptural language to carry quite troubling tenors: down with the scholars, down with the bishops, and down with the king. But beyond such problems of content, which could be (and were) forcefully countered with alternative readings of the scriptures, there was the more pressing issue of form. What was there to stop others from emulating Hunt, and insisting that the vernacular Bible facilitated extraordinary communication within them as well? How was one to return prophecy to its traditional bounds within a few special vehicles?

Prophet Hunt is not, of course, a unique case. The work of the historians Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, Ann Taves, David Cressy, and many others has documented the rise of "a nation of prophets" (to borrow Milton's phrase) in the decades of religious war that divide the English seventeenth-century.[16] One might add to this list the work of the literary critics Sharon Achinstein, Nigel Smith, and Misty Anderson, among others.[17] These scholars have amply demonstrated the abundance of popular prophecy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and its significance for political and literary forms alike. The present project builds on this tradition of scholarship but assumes a new perspective on the issue of popular prophecy. Rather than account for the perspective of prophetic revolutionaries like Hunt (or Gerrard Winstanley, or George Fox, or Margaret Fell, or Abeizer Coppe, or Joanna Southwell), I focus on the perspective of seventeenth-century reactionaries—that is, those who react to the problem of popular spiritual authority and re-articulate, in innovative and lastingly important ways, the lines

[16] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London and New York: Penguin, 1984); Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[17] Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Misty Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief, and the Borders of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

separating true from false prophets. I find that vernacular spiritual authority was too big a problem to solve with the discursive paradigm inherited from the feudal middle ages, which relied on a stable distinction between orthodoxy and heresy. Such a distinction, always difficult, particularly in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, became simply unworkable by the middle of the seventeenth century, when literally every theological position held in England was regarded as absolutely damnable by some near neighbor. This does not mean, of course, that writers of the time stopped thinking in terms of heresy. As recent work by David Loewenstein and others has shown, the concept of "heresy" continued to occupy the cultural consciousness of England through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries.[18] At the same time, uses of the term were highly unstable; in the words of Christopher Marsh, "orthodoxy and its opposites were very much in the eye of the beholder" during this period.[19] I suggest that "heresy" became less and less useful as a polemicizing term during the seventeenth century, as its central presupposition—that there is a stable doctrinal orthodoxy reflecting both God's moral will and the natural laws of creation from which it is damnation to deviate willfully by entertaining untrue opinions (the etymological sense of "heresies")—became more and more obviously untenable. The concept of "enthusiasm," in my view, works to address this instability in the post-Reformation understanding of heresy by shifting the emphasis from the examination of what a false prophet believes to the examination of how a false prophet uses language. The emphasis was once, "What doctrines are heretical?" It comes to be, "What uses of language are enthusiastic?" I trace this broad paradigm shift—which I call the shift from heresy to enthusiasm—in the following chapter. In the chapters that follow that one, I trace the process whereby a new counter-discourse of spiritual authority centered on the re-theorization of

[18] See David Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[19] Christopher Marsh, "'Godlie matrons' and 'loose-bodied dames': heresy and gender in the Family of Love," *Heresy, Literature and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, edited by David Loewenstein and John Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2006), 59.

language developed in order to preserve the traditional prophetic monopoly within a context of theological confusion. I follow prior scholars, including Jon Mee, in calling this "the discourse of enthusiasm." I see this discourse as engineered by counter-enthusiasts: thinkers who both define enthusiasm from without, and imitate enthusiasm from within.[20]

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2. We were never enthusiasts

Previous studies of "the discourse of enthusiasm," particularly those of Michael Heyd and Jon Mee, have been invaluable in shaping the terms of this project.[21] However, it is important to state at the outset how my approach here differs from these studies. These have tended to focus on the ways in which "enthusiasm," understood to be a manic condition of religious madness, was an actual, diagnosable disorder among seventeenth-century religious believers in England and beyond. This study emphasizes the degree to which the enthusiast—and enthusiasm, his malady—is a philosophical-allegorical heuristic for working out the major issues beneath the legitimation crisis spurred by the spread of popular prophetic appropriations of vernacular

[20] It is worth stating briefly why I chose this term over the more frequently used "anti-enthusiasm." Simply put, I feel that "counter" captures the rhythm of this discourse more accurately. This discourse is not about simply opposing something out there—being anti-enthusiasm. It is about countering a move in a political-theological field—the appropriation of scriptural authority without license—with another move—the construction of this appropriation in such a way as to refuse to legitimate the claims to spiritual power stemming from radical interpretations of vernacular scripture. Further, counter-enthusiasm connotes the way this construction involved the occupation of a quasi-enthusiastic position—not fully enthusiastic (indeed, as we'll see, according to the rules of this discourse, no one can call themselves enthusiastic, they can only be called so from without) but *provisionally* enthusiastic. The counter-enthusiast acknowledges that the rules of the game have changed. Legitimation can no longer be limited to the fiat of hierarchical authority. It must be shared with the illiterate (i.e. those unschooled in Ancient languages), at least in theory. But it cannot be shared on their terms; it has to create new terms, a new sort of enthusiasm which reproduces in part their claims to authority without allowing them a full stake in this reproduction. That said, even as counter-enthusiasm is, I feel, a terminological improvement on anti-enthusiasm, it still is not ideal. It does not capture the way in which enthusiasm itself is created before it is countered—hence how counter-enthusiasm defines itself against a force that it has itself named and categorized. Nevertheless, it is the best term I could find for the purposes of this project.

[21] Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The phrase, "the discourse of enthusiasm," can be found in Mee, passim.

scripture.[22] Enthusiasm tells us little about those called enthusiasts; it tells us much more about those calling others enthusiasts.[23]

Enthusiasm, then, is not a real condition. It is not, in other words, an actually diagnosable turn toward "mania," or "frenzy," or "fanaticism" evident in some religious believers and not in others. This might seem obvious when put so simply. But most previous scholarship on the question does not stress this point.[24] It sees enthusiasm in more or less the way that counter-enthusiasts want people to see enthusiasm—as a hermeneutic infection raging among the lower classes, diagnosable in terms of a disorderly literary style, and strange grimaces, and quakings, and transports, and so on. Hence Clement Hawes sees enthusiasm as a rhetoric of mania cultivated among the revolutionary classes during the English Civil Wars.[25] Shaun Irlam sees enthusiasm similarly—as a poetic attitude originating in the mid-century troubles, stifled during the succeeding century, and revived during the Romantic turn to revolution.[26] Jon Mee takes issue with this reading, perceiving (correctly) that enthusiasm is a regulatory constant in the eighteenth century, a sort of conceptual synecdoche for the uncivilized self which is held in check by rational

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[22] A note on the use of the masculine pronoun: I have decided to use "he/him/his" as default pronouns throughout this project when discussing "the prophet" or "the enthusiast" in the abstract. This is a difficult and inevitably unsatisfactory choice, especially given how inflected the discourse of enthusiasm—and false prophecy more generally—is by the politics of gender. Enthusiasm, as we will see, is regularly associated with weak, feminine, false prophecy as opposed to strong, masculine, true prophecy. At the same time, the enthusiast is almost always imagined as a male abstraction in both the pathologizing and rehabilitating strains of the discourse of enthusiasm. This is significant, and explicable largely because the alternative conceptual vocabulary for denouncing false prophets—the vocabulary of witchcraft—is still alive and well in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the witch is of course strongly figured as female. The enthusiast, in short, can be thought of as a sort of male witch—and with differences (even privileges) allotted to his gender. Above all, where the witch can be thought of as possessing a "hard" subjectivity which one cannot imagine oneself into, the enthusiast provides an ideal avatar for representing subjectivity. He might be insane, but he is heuristically useful in a way a witch is not for thinking through the pitfalls and dangerous extremes of belief and epistemology. In this way the enthusiast is quietly sympathetic, or at least available for exploration from the inside out. Hence to reflect (if only subtly) this important gendered dimension of the enthusiast I have relied on the male pronouns.

[23] Heyd, 22.

[24] Important exceptions include Heyd and Taves. Lawrence Klein also anticipates this emphasis to some degree: "the 'enthusiast' was a character type: a creature of passions, verging on madness, capable of contrary extremities (of heat/zeal/fervor/fire and cold/sobriety/gravity), extravagant and unsociable." See Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 162.

[25] Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[26] Shaun Irlam, *Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

subjectivity; but even he conflates the enthusiast with the disorderly body of the religious fanatic.[27] And Jordana Rosenberg sees the enthusiast as a vehicle for Weberian secularization—a person who modulates a frenzied drive to worship God into a frenzied drive to accumulate profit.[28]

Thus all of these studies treat enthusiasm as an actual condition affecting a certain sort of religious believer—overly pious, overly emotional—in the early modern era. The problem with such a conflation is simple. There is little evidence to suggest that the people called enthusiasts were doing anything all that different from those calling them enthusiasts. So many sorts of believers were called enthusiastic—and in a way so deeply marked by polemical interests—that the word has little value as a descriptor for any particular sort of religious practice.

This fact is clear from the sheer variety of its deployment. For Catholics, Lutherans (and all Reformers spawned from Luther) were clearly enthusiasts throwing down the established Christian authorities; indeed, they are the archetypal enthusiasts railing against the Church on no basis but that of their own force of assertion.[29] For Lutherans and Calvinists, Radical Protestants were enthusiasts. Further, accusations of enthusiasm flew between groups rhetorically lumped together as Radical Protestants. For Baptists like John Bunyan, Quakers were enthusiasts.[30] For Quakers and Diggers, meanwhile, Ranters were enthusiasts.[31] Enthusiasm is a rhetorically reversible charge. Many pamphlets of the seventeenth century might be summarized either as stating, "We're not enthusiasts! You are!" or, "We're not enthusiasts! They are!" (More interesting are the late-century pamphlets, written mostly by Quakers, which diverted the accusation of enthusiasm into an investigation of the philological structure of the term: "You call us enthusiasts.

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[27] Mee.
[28] Jordana Rosenberg, *Critical Enthusiasm: Capital Accumulation and the Transformation of Religious Passion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[29] See, e.g., John Fisher, *The answer unto the nine parts of controversy proposed by our late sovereign* (1626): "Wherefore Protestants […] approve Enthusaisme and immediat revelation …" (43 ff.). *EEBO*.
[30] Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 75 ff.
[31] Hill, *World*, 231-58; Gerrard Winstanley, *Fire in the bush. the spirit burning, not consuming, but purging mankinde* (1650), 4. *EEBO*.

We're going to take that as a compliment, and here's why.")[32] And the accusation of enthusiasm was not, of course, limited to groups; many individual figures influential in defining enthusiasm and condemning enthusiasts—including Luther, Descartes, Henry More, and Jonathan Edwards—found the term turned against them.[33] It is often assumed that enthusiasm is passed, as it were, to the left—from high- to low-church forms of belief. (In contrast, "superstition" and "formalism" are traditionally seen as opprobria passed from low to high.)[34] But even this isn't reliable as a schema. Catholics were regularly accused of enthusiasm from the Protestant perspective.[35] Indeed, a subgenre denouncing Catholic enthusiasts and connecting them genealogically to Anabaptists—which, as we will see, goes all the way back to Luther—was particularly popular in the late seventeenth century panic inspired by the Popish Plot.[36]

This volatility in the term is clear when one considers the experience of Anne Conway—the philosopher and colleague of the very influential counter-enthusiast Henry More. Conway was regularly ill and bedridden, hence in need of nursing and attendance. Toward the end of her life, she hired some Quaker women to do this work. Stocked with long conversations with More on the subject of Quakerism, Conway expected them to be enthusiasts—frenzied, rhetorically exuberant, melancholic, etc. She was surprised to find them, on the contrary, "so still, and very serious." She writes:

> [T]he particular acquaintance with such living examples of great patience under such sundry heavy exercises, both of bodily sickness and other calamities… I find begets a more lively faith and uninterrupted desire of approach to such a behavior

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[32] See especially the works of George Keith, including *Divine immediate revelation and inspiration, continued in the true church* (1668). *EEBO*.
[33] Heyd, 109-43.
[34] Swift, in *A Tale of a Tub*, and David Hume, in his essay, "Superstition and Enthusiasm," are important for crystallizing this distinction. It is an important dimension of the self-mythogizing of the Anglican perspective as navigating the Scylla of enthusiasm and the Charybdis of superstition. See Hume, *Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 38-42.
[35] Consider Luther, below. See also Edward Stillingfleet's writings against Catholic enthusiasm, beginning with *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* (1665) and ending with *Several Conferences Concerning the Idolatry of the Church of Rome* (1679). These occasioned many furious rebuttals.
[36] See Stillingfleet, *The Mischief of Separation* (1680). *EEBO*.

> in like exigencies, then the most learned and rhetorical discourses of resignation can do […] I pray God give us all a clear discerning between Melancholy Enthusiasm and true Inspiration that we may not be imposed on to believe a lie. The great difference of opinion in this point amongst the learned and experienced occasions much perplexity in minds less exercised, and not so well fitted for judging.[37]

Led to expect mere rhetoric, Conway found them leading by practice. Led to expect them to exhibit nervous energy, she found them calm and still. She still defers, at the end of the letter, to "the learned and experienced" who have discerned (albeit in very different ways) the signs of "Enthusiasm" as distinct from "true Inspiration"—but one might also detect here a wry note. She perhaps finds the learned doctors constructing their false prophets—one among whom is her correspondent—more exhausting than any Quaker. One might also hear in her allusion to their "many opinions" a distant suggestion that they too might be seen as so many heretics arguing baseless beliefs.

This project takes Conway's experience of a disconnection between virtual and actual "enthusiasts" to have been the rule rather than the exception. Enthusiasm was not a real condition. It was a virtual condition. But this does not mean that enthusiasm was not a real problem—or, rather, was not constructed to address a real problem: the crisis of spiritual legitimacy growing from the wide dissemination of the vernacular Bible, and the subsequent growth of unlicensed popular spiritual authority. As we've already seen in the example of Prophet Hunt, this truly was a threat to power, and not one easily managed. The discourse of enthusiasm attempts to do just this—to manage a real threat by constructing an imaginary one.

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[37] Anne Conway to Henry More, Ragley, 4 February 1675[6], in Marjorie Hope Nicholson, ed., *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642-1684*, revised by Sarah Hutton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 422.

3. Enthusiasm and mimesis

Thus enthusiasm was always projected outward from a self-proclaimed unenthusiastic center position. In naming enthusiasts, one declared—or attempted to declare—oneself free from enthusiasm.

In this way, the discourse of enthusiasm had much in common with other discourses that construct and attack upstart pretenders to the monopoly on spiritual authority—the discourses of heresy and witchcraft.[38] These too defined an orthodox center against and in terms of a heterodox fringe. But unlike heretics and witches, who were almost always pathologized from a third-person perspective, enthusiasts were frequently attacked from within—from the second-person perspective, through rhetorical and satirical imitation.

To choose just one example, in 1642, the Royalist poet John Taylor—known as "the Water Poet" because his day job involved ferrying passengers across the Thames—produced a mock-sermon titled, *A Tale in a Tub*.[39] This is, of course, a significant title given Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, and already suggestive of the degree to which Swift's satirical masterpiece participates in a long counter-enthusiastic tradition populated in earlier decades by somewhat cruder productions. In his *Tale*, Taylor poses as Mi-heele Mendsoale, a once-lowly, now divinely illuminated cobbler up on his high heels, preaching to the masses. "Beloved Sisters, and my well infected Brethren," Mendsoale begins, (deliberately privileging women in his salutation—very troubling indeed), "attend this text, as you shall find it written in the first Chapter of *Bell* and the *Dragon*."[40] Mendsoale proceeds to offer a deliberately shoddy exegesis, starting with the first word of the

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[38] Cf. Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Stephens argues that participants in intellectual debates regarding the nature of witches used the figure of the demon-loving witch to work through fundamental problems of spiritual authority: above all, are demons and other spirits real or imaginary?

[39] For an interesting study of the "amphibious" Taylor and his complex poetic contexts, see Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet, 1578-1653* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1994).

[40] John Taylor, *A tale in a tub, or, A tub lecture as it was delivered by Mi-Heele Mendsoale, an inspired Brownist and a most upright translator in a meeting house neere* (Bedlam, London: Printed in the yeare when Brownists did domineare, 1642), i. *EEBO*. Taylor's *Tale* was well received. It was written in 1641 and reprinted twice. He also wrote a sequel responding to his own persona—*A full and compleat answer against the writer of a late volume set forth entituled A tale in a tub, or, A tub lecture: with a vindication of that ridiculous name called roundheads: together with some excellent verses on the defacing of Cheapside crosse: also proving that it is far better to preach in a boat than in a tub* (1642)—which was also reprinted once.

first verse: "*Now the Babilonians had an Idoll they called Bell* […] First I will begin with the time, you must not conceive that it was 1,10. 100. 1000 yeares agoe, but *Now*, at this present, *Now the Babylonians*, *&c.* Beloved there is much evill and abomination to be picked out of these three letters *Now.*"[41]

A number of crucial features that typify the polemical imitation of enthusiasm can be identified from this one brief example. Enthusiasts were depicted as overly friendly to women—as either actually feminine or feminized. The Quakers, as is well known, were especially notorious for allowing women equal spiritual status with men.[42] They were depicted as lower-class—with their lowly professions (whether tailor, tinker, butcher, or cobbler) lending much ammunition to these caricatures. And they were depicted as dangerous fools retailoring and tinkering around with and butchering and cobbling back together extremely serious matters of religion—represented here in the sloppy interpretation of a Biblical text. This interpretation is not just unskillful, as it clearly misreads the sense in which the word "now" is used in the first verse of Bel and the Dragon—it is politically dangerous. Taylor's Mendsoale, a "Brownist," insists that this text applies to the present moment. Babylon is not in the past. It is *now*. Idolatry is not a problem that plagued the past. It plagues the present. This is the nightmare of enthusiasm brought to life in print—a farcically incompetent upstart hermeneut leveraging the authority of scripture to immanentize the eschaton. Notice also that Taylor will not associate Mendsoale with actually sacred scripture, instead foisting the apocryphal Bel and the Dragon upon him—although, needless to say, most of those called enthusiasts consistently cited canon scripture, particularly the Gospels and (as we'll see in the chapter on Locke) the Letters of Paul.

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[41] Taylor, *A tale in a tub*, 1.

[42] For the status of prophesying women among Quakers, which was more complex than counter-enthusiasts frequently supposed, see Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1992), 381-96.

One can further see in this example the degree to which the discourse of enthusiasm dealt with complex matters of mimesis. The so-called enthusiast claimed to reflect—to mirror—the mind of God as recorded in the scriptures. Travestying counter-enthusiasts like Taylor (and later Samuel Butler and Jonathan Swift) worked by imitating and undermining the enthusiast's claim to mirror the divine, presenting a version of the enthusiast who clearly distorts rather than reflects this divine image. Meanwhile, a complementary branch of philosophical counter-enthusiasts (represented in this project by Henry More and John Locke) theorized this distorting effect of enthusiasm on the representation of meaning, proposing that the enthusiast is himself a vessel who muddies the pure waters of language either by polluting words with his unbalanced humors (More's position) or by neglecting to respect the logical structure of signification (Locke's position). I will propose that these matters of enthusiastic mimesis were pitched at three concurrent levels—reflection, imitation, and configuration—which it would be helpful to introduce here.

First, the enthusiast was used as a vehicle for working out the situation of the present moment within the larger terms of eternity. In Erich Auerbach's terms, the enthusiast can be identified as a vehicle for thinking about *figura*—the way in which the sacred past prefigures the present, and likewise the way in which the present prefigures the future, the Second Coming—during a moment when such figuration schema were sharply debated.[43] The enthusiast took the Bible to be a living prophetic document, to reveal the deep truth about *now*. The counter-enthusiast, by masquerading as a caricature of his opponent, reveals how ridiculous and overweening this interpretation actually is. He shows how wrong millenarian interpretations of scripture are by becoming, briefly and ironically, an inept millenarian.

[43] Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, translated by Jane O. Newman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 65-113.

One might identify in the discourse of enthusiasm, then, a cosmic concern with reflective mimesis—a concern with the question of how present appearances reflect the greater arc revealed in sacred scriptures. The discourse of enthusiasm can thus be said to be concerned with the representation of reality, understood in Christian typological terms as the great story of the relationship of humanity and divinity. Of course, this phrase, "the representation of reality," calls to mind Auerbach's larger project in *Mimesis*, which identifies certain dominant literary modes of representation characteristic of different historical periods.[44] The discourse of enthusiasm is concerned with just this task—the representation of reality in seventeenth-century England. But this discourse also reveals the degree to which this work was deeply contested during this era—not just in the grand terms of an Auerbachian opposition between, say, the representational modes of Homer and the Bible, but in much more common (albeit just as momentous) local contestations. This was a time of struggle regarding the basic terms of representation—of whose account of things better reflects the divine will. Indeed, this is likely the case for any era dominated by religious war, which is, after all, finally motivated by fundamental disputations regarding the nature of reality considered in terms of the purported history of human-divine relations. The degree to which we cannot appreciate this purchase of religious dispute in the common understanding of reality—and feel, with Swift's Master Houyhnhnm, that religious wars are silly battles over doctrinal iotas and ritual absurdities ("Whether it be better to *kiss a Post*, or throw it into the Fire," etc.)—reflects the degree to which the discourse of enthusiasm has reframed the understanding of cosmic mimesis common to secular institutions.[45]

But this is not the only way in which the discourse of enthusiasm was concerned with mimesis. As we can also see in Taylor's imitation of Mendsoale, authors used the discourse of

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[44] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[45] Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins, *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 468. The passage concludes: "Neither are any Wars so furious and bloody, or of so long Continuance, as those occasioned by Difference in Opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent" (469).

enthusiasm to test the degree to which purported enthusiasts could be imitated and, as it were, replaced by virtual versions of themselves—and thus occupied by authors, and (to use a phrase that will come up regularly in this project) "virtually witnessed" by readers.[46] Counter-enthusiasm constructed the enthusiast through the provisional occupation and imitation of its polemical target. Over time, such constructions came to overwhelm dissidents themselves—particularly, as we'll see, in the version of the discourse perfected by Swift. Thus the discourse was concerned not only with the level of cosmic mimesis—the ability of a human vessel to reflect the divine plan—but also with the level of social mimesis—the ability of one writer to mimetically overshadow another. If the first, cosmic level was concerned with mimesis as reflection of the divine image, this second, social level was concerned with mimesis as polemical mimicry.

There is also a third sense in which the discourse of enthusiasm was concerned with mimesis. It became deeply concerned, particularly in the version of the discourse influenced by the Cambridge Platonists (and subsequently by John Locke) with accounting for the way in which language reflects deeper structures of signification—whether the physical structures of the body (which are emphasized by Henry More), or the logical structures of meaning (as emphasized by John Locke). The enthusiast was thus used as a heuristic for thinking about the relation between language and embodiment in general—for the configuration of meaning—and for reframing this relation so as to challenge popular claims to divine illumination. The enthusiastic body, in this register, was treated as mimetic of nothing but its own humoral dysfunction. The enthusiast claimed to reflect the Logos of God. In fact, he reflected the material word, produced by chance, de-spiritualized, deprived of a larger background of meaning.[47]

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[46] For the notion of "virtual witnessing," see Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's very influential study of the different experimental methods of Hobbes and Boyle, first published in 1985, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 60 ff.

[47] Richard Kroll, *The Material Word: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

In sum, then, there are three primary ways in which the discourse of enthusiasm mediated concerns regarding mimesis. 1) At the level of cosmic reflection, it offered a means of navigating and organizing different claims of participation in the divine reality conditioning Creation. 2) At the imitative level of social imitation, it offered a polemical means of caricaturing claims to spiritual authority. 3) At the level of physiological configuration, it offered a heuristic for thinking about the basic link between embodiment and signification—a way, if not to answer, then to ask the question, how are words related to speaking bodies? All three of these levels, as I've mentioned, were entangled in the discourse of enthusiasm. Social mimesis was developed largely to combat claims to cosmic mimesis. In other words, the ridiculous virtual enthusiast evident in a publication like Taylor's absorbs the politically threatening perspective of millenarian cosmic mimesis, the claim to represent and reflect God's will. Likewise, the ostensibly medical investigation of the power of enthusiastic language to fascinate and persuade groups of listeners was motivated by a desire to naturalize and despiritualize dissident claims to spiritual authority. As this strain of the discourse went, "They might say that they're inspired, they might even *sound* like they're inspired, but don't believe them—they're just bodies making empty noises."

But at the same time that these levels of mimetic analysis were entangled, they were also becoming differentiated from one another. Indeed, studying this discourse reveals the emergence of distinct categories of representation—divine truth, social perception, medical fact—in the bud, as it were. The study of enthusiasm shows in part how the categories now associated with the "rationalized" world emerged from the particular pressures exerted on institutional legitimacy by unlicensed claims to spiritual authority. It offers a new genealogy of enlightenment.[48]

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[48] This turn recalls J.G.A. Pocock's argument that enthusiasm is the "antiself" of enlightenment. See Pocock, "Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment," *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850*, edited by Lawrence E. Klein and Antholy J. La Vopa (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1998), 7-28. This is probably the single most illuminating essay on enthusiasm that has been written. Pocock argues that concerns with enthusiasm bridge the early and later enlightenment, and suggests that as enthusiasm became associated with philosophical rather than religious questions "it ceases to be merely a phenomenon of that spirituality that Enlightenment set out to displace, and becomes instead a phenomenon of Enlightenment itself" (26). Nevertheless, as later discussion will show, I depart in important ways from Pocock's analysis of enthusiasm—particularly by emphasizing the role of enthusiasm in

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4. Rationalization

Hence I am suggesting that the approach to the discourse of enthusiasm in this project emphasizes the degree to which this discourse is important for the process known (after Max Weber) as "the rationalization of society." It is worth clarifying what I mean by this, as the present sense is perhaps not the commonest applied to the phrase.

For many academics, rationalization theory is primarily associated with the thinking of the Frankfurt School, particularly Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who described enlightenment and modernity in terms of the tragic triumph of instrumental reason culminating in worldwide economic and ecological depredation.[49] Weber captures this threat in one of his starkest and best-known sentences—"Not summer's bloom lies ahead of us, but rather a polar night of icy darkness and hardness, no matter which group may triumph externally now."[50] While keeping this perspective in view, I see the rationalization of enthusiasm rather in terms of Jürgen Habermas' Kantian interpretation of Weberian sociology, which separates experience into the distinct validity domains of factual-empirical discovery (science), intersubjective-normative jurisprudence (law), and therapeutic-subjective judgment (art).[51]

This trifurcation follows from a narrative of secularization. For centuries, as Habermas' Weber would have it, what we call law reflected the Creator's will as revealed in—or extrapolated from—the books of scripture; what we call science explored God's creation as observable in the book of nature; and what we call private conscience involved the self in the cosmic struggle for

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rationalization, and in the representation of *provisional* rather than true mental totalities. See the section on totality below and the discussion of Pocock in the Epilogue.

[49] Cf. "Enlightenment, understood in its widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity." Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

[50] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 128.

[51] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Beacon Press: Boston, 1984), 143 ff.

souls. The Protestant Spirit isolated and detheologized these dimensions of society in the course of articulating a more private, personal faith unmoored from the hierarchies of the Catholic Church. It worked above all in three ways: 1) by rejecting the efficacy of sacraments and (as it was pejoratively called) "priestcraft" in general, 2) by particularized the individual believer in the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), 3) and by emphasizing the importance of a calling or vocation, increasingly interpreted in bourgeois professional terms, demonstrating a dutiful, obedient, and worldly-ascetic relationship to God.[52] From this disenchantment of religion emerged both capitalist economics (characterized by a distinction between households and corporations, a formal freedom of labor power, an investment structure oriented toward markets, and the application of technical-scientific knowledge) and the modern bureaucratic state (characterized by a permanent and centralized system of taxation, a standing centralized military, a monopoly on legitimate violence, and the division of administrative roles into centrally organized offices).[53] Rationalization is thus, in its principal articulation, conceived of as emerging from the creative-destructive energy in Protestantism.

For Habermas, this is on the whole a positive development. The disenchantment of religion leads to the enlightenment, culminating in Kant's three critiques, which finally rationally separate the sort of thing a natural fact is from the sort of thing a social norm is from the sort of thing a private judgment is. This differentiation allows for the emergence of expert domains and institutions devoted respectively to science, law, and art: thus for attention to the peculiar vicissitudes of embodied subjectivity (in practices like clinical therapy and psychoanalysis); for more just and tolerant social norms (resulting in the ideals of legal equality regardless of gender, race, class, and, sexuality); and for the ever-more precise theorization and technologization of the natural world. Like Adorno, Habermas laments the degree to which one particular mode of

[52] See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings*, translated by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin, 2002); Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber*; Habermas, *TCA*, 164-65.
[53] Habermas, *TCA*, 158.

reason—instrumental, veridical reason—has tended to overshadow the equally important subjective and intersubjective domains of personal experience and social morality. Also like Adorno, he is wary of the allures of irrationality seemingly twisted into the process of modernization, and suspicious of the rejection of enlightenment values which can result (in his view) in disastrous political situations like the one into which he was born in 1929 Düsseldorf.[54] But he sees the continued pursuit and refinement of the enlightenment process of rationalization as the best available for a multicultural polity.

The degree to which this narrative of the trifurcation of experience is useful for the present project must be clear from the above pages, which have already begun to incorporate the nature-self-society paradigm. But, as must also be clear, I emphasize a crucial conceptual mechanism missing in Habermas' account: the way that rationalization is driven by an internal Protestant critique of overweening unlicensed subjectivities, i.e. self-authorized prophets. In my view, the crisis of authority that the discourse of enthusiasm emerges to address necessitates the clarification and distinction of the validity domains central to Habermas' account of enlightenment. Nature must be distinguished from society must be distinguished from subjectivity in order to put a stop to vernacular appropriations of religious authority. The totalizing flux of these elements represented in unlicensed prophetic speech, which mingles claims about natural events with claims about normative imperatives with claims about subjective feelings, must be calmed and categorized, ordered and organized.

Each of the three counter-enthusiasts considered here helps especially to clarify one of the validity domains distinguished by the rationalized perspective. More stylizes the material dimension of the enthusiast's body. Locke stylizes the subjective dimension, exhibiting a profound concern with accounting for the relation between experience and signification. Swift

[54] Habermas presents his concerns regarding the lure of postmodern irrationalism and the "performative contradiction of a self-referential critique of reason" (193) in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

stylizes the intersubjective dimension, emphasizing the way that the enthusiast is a social and literary construction. But it is not necessary to overstress the degree to which each of these thinkers is especially committed to refining one particular validity domain. What is more important is that they use the enthusiast as a figurative means of distinguishing between epistemological categories and levels of signification in ways that ultimately contribute to the rationalization of experience.

Thus Habermas' account of the centrality of the emergence of these particular validity domains for the rationalization of society offers a useful heuristic for this project. But it also offers more than a heuristic. It offers a way of framing the connection between the concept of enlightenment and the struggle for representation described here—and it offers a link to the present moment. Insofar as the rationalization of society is rooted in the crises of spiritual authority, Habermas' theory is itself one result of the discourse of enthusiasm.

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5. False totalities

As I have suggested, then, the discourse of enthusiasm framed the false prophet in terms of false totalities. The figuration of the enthusiast offered a way of conceiving of an apparently complete world-view, from the enthusiast's own purported perspective, which was revealed to be one node or part of a larger world-view, from the counter-enthusiast's perspective. This work, as I've suggested, was crucial to the process of rationalization—which eventually distinguished the validity domains of self, nature, and society. The enthusiast provided an early figurative resource for this process, allowing counter-enthusiasts to frame each validity domain in terms of a false enthusiastic totality which can in fact be reduced to a category of experience. "The enthusiast *thinks* he perceives the divine whole," as More might say, "but in fact he perceives only the disorderly images produced by his own melancholic imagination." Likewise, Locke might say, "The enthusiast speaks of divine wholes, but in fact he simply represents subjective associations

which he provides no compelling reasons to take as anything more than that." Finally, Swift might say, "The enthusiast claims to know divine mysteries, but this is just his strategy for attracting readers; like me, he is just another peddler in the marketplace of ideas—but unlike me, he doesn't admit it." Counter-enthusiasms thus proposed to enclose enthusiastic totalities within a limited categorical horizon: nature, self, or society.

In this way, the discourse of enthusiasm participates in the longer task of distinguishing true from false prophets—that is, put differently, true from false representatives of totality—so central to early modernity and indeed to earlier eras as well. Prophets are, at least in theory, receptacles for the totalizing perspective of the divine. They are parts speaking for the Creator of the whole. And so the basic question in mediating between prophets was often simple: on behalf of which god is this prophet speaking? Is that god stronger or weaker than this other prophet's god? Put differently, is the totality on behalf of which this prophet speaks bigger or smaller than the totality on behalf of which this other prophet speaks? Whose totality swallows the other's? One might see this way of viewing things exemplified in the trope of miracle battles—for instance, the confrontation of Moses and the magicians in Exodus. Aaron casts down his rod and it becomes a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians do the same: "For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods."[55] My god's snake swallows your god's snake; my totality is bigger than your totality.

In the seventeenth century discourse of heresy, which relies on a monotheistic conception of the divine, this standard shifts somewhat. It becomes: is this prophet speaking on behalf of the one true God, or not? The prophet is interrogated not according to the relative strength of his god, but according to whether or not he can be judged doctrinally to speak on behalf of the *true* God, the *real* God, the *only* God—the Creator of all that is. The signs for determining whether the prophet speaks for the true God are doctrinally agreed upon, and his

[55] Exodus 7.12.

truth or falsity is determined above all on this basis. The question becomes not "whose totality is bigger?" but "is this created being really speaking for the Creator of all things—thus for the only totality that really is?" As we've seen, this standard too has Mosaic precedent:

> If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.[56]

In other words, Deuteronomy proposes that ultimately even the standard of miracle battles must be understood as subordinate to the doctrinal standard. If the wrong god's prophet performs miracles—even if his snake swallows your snake—you still should not believe him. In that case, that prophet should be understood to be a temptation sent by the true God. As a corollary, if someone says that he comes from the true God—if he "speaketh in the name of the LORD"—his claims to be a prophet must at least initially be taken seriously.[57] This was not merely the standard according to Mosaic Law. It persisted in seventeenth century England. Oliver Cromwell's government, for example, received and took seriously many retrospectively dubious figures claiming to interpret the will of the Christian God—as long as they had no disciples of their own.[58] Hence the heresy paradigm, which I will discuss at length in the chapter that follows, was fundamentally concerned with the prophet's beliefs—in other words, with whether his beliefs are true reflections of his creaturely relationship to God, or are, on the contrary, just his opinions.

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[56] Deuteronomy 13.1-3.
[57] See Deuteronomy 18.18-22.
[58] Hill, *World*, 278-79.

The discourse of enthusiasm again tweaked this question. It retained the emphasis on the creature-creator distinction, but it gave up the idea that the emphasis in determining a false prophet should be on the beliefs of the prophet. The false prophet—now cast as "the enthusiast"—might appear to have solid doctrinal positions. He might seem to be aligned with the one true totality. But he was not. And each counter-enthusiasm came up with a different way for determining how he was not. Henry More's counter-enthusiasm, as we will see, emphasizes his medical and psychological pathologies: the enthusiast is not to be understood as a rational creature; he is in fact a malfunctioning body, with his humors out of balance. Enthusiasm is thus an expression of bad humors. John Locke's counter-enthusiasm stresses the illegitimacy of the enthusiast's subjective grounds for credibility. He might claim to represent the divine totality, but he cannot explain why we should believe him, and so he cannot be trusted. Enthusiasm is a sign of an irrational subject. Jonathan Swift's counter-enthusiasm emphasizes the enthusiast's rhetorical ineptitude. He frames the enthusiast as capable of hoodwinking the credulous (i.e., in Swift's class-inflected view, mostly the poor), but also as susceptible to being hoodwinked by the clever (i.e. by Swift)—which would certainly not be the case if he were really God's earthly representative. The enthusiast is an effect of an overly credulous public sphere at once hungry for information and uninformed.

Thus in the discourse of enthusiasm what the enthusiast believes becomes frankly unimportant (with some exceptions, to be discussed below). He is represented as a limited totality not because he believes in a false god, or because he professes opinions contrary to the doctrine of the true God, but because he expresses an incomplete (but seductive) total view on the world. The enthusiast represents a false totality reducible to some other category. For More, the enthusiast shows what matter can do on its own. He is stylized bad materiality. For Locke, he expresses a closed subjectivity that insists without reasons on its special relation to the whole. He is stylized bad subjectivity. For Swift, he exploits a market greedy for easy truths. He is stylized

bad intersubjectivity. All three counter-enthusiasms pitch themselves as able to account for and contain the false totality of the enthusiast—as able to see the enthusiast as a symptom of a greater whole. The enthusiast is *a* totality (in the sense of a unique, world-experiencing subjectivity); he claims to express *the* totality (that is, the perspective of God); when he symptomatically expresses *another* totality (whether the false totality of materialism, subjectivism, or information); which is in fact also a *limited* totality (which the counter-enthusiast shows by slotting that false totality within his own more capacious perspective).

This project is concerned with the formal and structural features of counter-enthusiasm itself—which are literary, in that they hinge on rhetorical, allegorical, and figurative techniques for representing other minds and bodies, but which are in a sense proto-literary, in that they are concerned first and foremost with the representation of shared reality and the relation of worldly creatures to the author of being. The discourse of enthusiasm is important for arranging and organizing totalities—not only in each counter-enthusiastic example, but in the discourse as a whole. In a future version of this project, I hope to connect the role the enthusiast plays in collective mimesis (by representing false totalities) to the emergence of the form of narrative known as the novel, which can be seen not only as a post-religious totality in itself (as Lukàcs has famously argued) but as a formal auditorium of limited totalities.[59] This form seems ideally suited to the double task of the discourse of enthusiasm—to fold these enthusiastic characters, each of which is a totality onto itself, into another, wider, more capacious totality. Moreover, this ideological imperative to contain apparent totalities within oneself might be linked in the longer term to the liberal valorization of "manysidedness," which can be seen as a form of counter-enthusiastic being suspending many committed ideological perspectives—many points-of-view in

[59] See Georg Lukàcs, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, translated by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971). See also M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981).

themselves total—within one's universally sympathetic and personally ironic self-understanding.[60] For now, these connections must remain merely suggestive.

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6. Enthusiasm and perspicuity

As suggested above, the discourse of enthusiasm finally opened on to a more basic question regarding the nature of language and its relation, on one hand, to God, and on the other hand, to human beings. In closing this introduction, I would like to develop my sense of the connection between enthusiasm and language, as this will be a central focus in all that follows.

Prior studies of enthusiasm have recognized the connection of enthusiasm and language. But they have not delved to the basis of this connection—to the role of the understanding of the Word itself for the political significance of prophecy. Instead, they have emphasized the degree to which enthusiasm was thought of as connected to a disorderly style of speaking and writing—overly ornate and undisciplined. In this way, once again, they have largely reproduced the polemical perspective of counter-enthusiasts like (as we will see) Meric Casaubon, Henry More, John Smith, and John Locke. Nevertheless, it is worth reviewing prior work on the connection of enthusiasm and language in order to further clarify the distinctiveness of my approach here.

The relation between enthusiasm and linguistic style is first formulated in the twentieth century by George Williamson, who notes that the "neoclassical" style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is motivated by "the revolt against Enthusiasm."[61] He is the first—but hardly the last—to trace this revolt through a series of thinkers (Bacon, Hobbes, Thomas Sprat) who self-consciously combat "obscurity" in language, which they associate with the ecstatic enthusiasms of misled scholastic philosophers and theologians, and propose instead stylistic ideals of "plainness" and "perspicuity." During the mid-twentieth century, many critics reinforce

[60] The notion of manysidedness is associated with James Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. The idea of ironized selfhood is central to Richard Rorty, *Solidarity, Irony, Contingency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[61] George Williamson, "The Restoration Revolt Against Enthusiasm," *Studies in Philology* 30.4 (1933), 571.

his sense of the century as witnessing "the rise of the plain style," in opposition to rhetoricity and metaphor as such.[62] Perhaps most influentially, Richard Foster Jones' investigations into seventeenth-century style purport to find Royal Society members like Joseph Glanvill revising their prose to eliminate enthusiastic flourishes, showing, in Jones' words, that "distrust of language and hatred of words" is "a unique characteristic of early modern science," cultivated, in part, as a reaction to the perceived scourge of enthusiasm.[63]

Having become something of a critical truism, the thesis that perspicuity is a late-century revolt against enthusiasm met with powerful and necessary backlash in the later decades of the twentieth century. As Brian Vickers notes, thinkers like Bacon, Hobbes, Sprat, and Glanvill do claim to write in a plain style. But this doesn't mean we should believe they have a monopoly on stylistic plainness as such. This doesn't even mean that they personally achieve a plain style in any objective sense.[64] Their writings are as rhetorical as anyone else's. Their language is, inevitably, soaked in style, plain or not. And their prolific writings demonstrate not an aversion to words, but a mastery of them. What is at issue in questions of style for Vickers and like-minded critics is the larger polemical context of the moment. As Vickers writes:

> The crucial fact, which must never be lost sight of in discussing the seventeenth century, is that contemporary accounts of style are seldom neutral or accurately descriptive. They are the result of animus, or controversy, or party politics, or religious dispute. What so many of these writers give us is not a program or manifesto for how they themselves intend to write but an account of how their opponents write. And diagnosing their opponents' style is an action that does not exist on the same level as

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[62] Basil Wiley, *The Seventeenth-Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1963); Morris W. Croll, *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm: Essays by Morris E. Croll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Robert Adolph, *Rise of Modern Prose Style* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968); Croll, *Attic and Baroque Prose Style: The Anti-Ciceronian Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

[63] Cited in Brian Vickers, "The Royal Society and English Prose Style: A Reassessment," in Brian Vickers and Nancy Struever, *Rhetoric and the Pursuit of Truth: Language Change in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1985), 25.

[64] This is the takeaway of Paul Arakelian, "The Myth of a Restoration Style Shift," *The Eighteenth Century* 20.3 (1979): 227-45.

> writing a prescriptive style manual. Nor, actually, is the dispute primarily one about style. You attack your enemies for their style, but that is part of your whole campaign; or, equally, the style is a symptom of something else that you disapprove of.[65]

In short, there is no style shift away from rhetoric and toward plainness. There is a time-honored polemical practice of accusing those you disagree with of being mere sophists and rhetoricians, while you and yours are logical, reasonable, and truthful.[66]

Vickers is right to emphasize that a progressive history of style marching out of the murkily beautiful darkness of (say) Thomas Browne toward the plain clarity of (say) William Temple, which is openly relished in a critic like Basil Wiley and often implied in Jones, is too simple an account. But his treatment of style as "a symptom of something else you disapprove of," as a surface effect which is overly emphasized in Jones' account, to some extent misses the point. As Jones understands, language was not merely a vehicle and occasional target of late-century religious and political controversy. It was a theoretical object of the highest value lodged at the center of such controversy. Disputes over the basic nature of the relation of words to things, of language to nature, were centrally important to the later seventeenth century.[67] They were not polemical flourishes. They drove to the religious heart of the matter.

The notion that the calm, orderly prose of the enlightened writer contrasts with the rhetorically disordered surface of the enthusiastic writer must be understood within the context of the political theology of language. The claim to possess plain language was itself a claim to theological priority over other, competing groups. Insofar as one's language was clear, plain, and perspicuous, it reflected the perspicuity universally acknowledged as intrinsic to God's creation and to the Bible. The value of plainness for questions of spiritual authority is clearly evident, for

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[65] Vickers, 23-24.

[66] See also Arakelian, which purports to refute empirically the notion that style shifts away from metaphor in the Restoration period. Also in opposition to the Williamson-Croll-Jones thesis, Robert Markley, in *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England, 1660-1740* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), sees anxiety about language in the later seventeenth century as linked to a longer tradition of recognizing one's thrownness into a state of semantic instability and divine inaccessibility from Augustine to Derrida.

[67] Schaffer and Shapin, 25.

instance, in the paradox noted by Roger Pooley, N.H. Keeble, and others, who show that all sides of the intra-Protestant controversies in early modern England claimed to speak and write plainly, while accusing their opponents of extravagance and excess.[68] This maps the struggle for scriptural and hermeneutic authority in the seventeenth century. From Keeble's perspective, there is a shift in the discourse of plainness over the course of the century that reflects the broader religious atmosphere of early modern England. Early on, the growing movement of Protestants known as Puritans claim to read and preach plainness, largely emphasizing the avoidance of Latin and Greek obfuscations in favor of straightforward and easily understood English preaching, as exemplified in William Perkins' *Arte of Prophecying* (1592 and 1607): "[Preaching should be] both simple and perspicuous, fit both for the peoples understanding, and to expresse the Majestie of the Spirit … Wherefore neither the words of arts, nor Greeke and Latine phrases and quirkes must be intermingled in the sermon."[69] This stylistic standard is, Keeble joins Pooley in observing, set in contrast to the ornate, learned, allusive style of the High Church of the 1630s—exemplified best, perhaps, in the prose style of Andrewes or Donne. Later in the century, the shoe appears to be on the other foot, as Anglican clergy "present themselves as the guardians of lucidity and perspicuity against the extravagant excesses of the nonconformists' metaphorical and figurative indulgence, imprecise and obscurely evocative phraseology, and wild flights of fancy."[70] Keeble proposes a standard for sorting out this debate: nonconformists tend to emphasize the ineffability of the experience of God, which is finally beyond all language, while conformists want God and his doctrines to make rational sense.[71] And this observation, as we will see, is certainly valuable in helping to trace the emergence of "reason" as the standard for divine-human contact, as especially emphasized by the Cambridge Platonists. But one needn't go this far with the

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[68] Roger Pooley, "Language and Loyalty: Plain Style at the Restoration," *Literature and History* 6.1 (1980), 4; N.H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester Univ. Press, 1987), 240-59. See also Harold Fisch, "The Puritans and the Reform of Prose Style," *ELH* 19.4 (1952): 229-47.
[69] William Perkins, *The Workes*, 3 vols (Cambridge 1616-18), vol. 2, 670b. *EEBO*.
[70] Keeble, 242.
[71] Keeble, 246-47.

analysis. Certainly orthodox Christians, even those committed to rationality, are capable of placing the ineffable at the center of their belief—with Aquinas being only a particularly obvious example. And likewise unorthodox Christians champion the rationality of religious concepts—and here one might think especially of Milton. What is at conflict is not so much a question of differing subjective attitudes toward the divine, as differing attitudes toward the role of language in mediating divine authority.

The crux of the matter is simple. All Christian sects of the seventeenth century, nonconformist and conformist alike, affirm the perspicuity of scripture. This is, indeed, a Protestant truism from Luther to Calvin to Arminius to Tyndale to Cranmer to Foxe to Cromwell. All Protestant theologies insist that they are simply reading scripture in the simplest and most consistent terms. They are reading the plain, literal meaning.[72] Others extravagantly impose their own interpretations upon the obvious. Perspicuity reflects divine light; the perspicuous preacher is a medium through which the spirit shines. Extravagance reflects pride and sin; the extravagant preacher produces an image of divine truth as stamped by his own muddied, polluted, and deformed mind.

This is not to say that there aren't clear hermeneutical differences detectable in the various approaches to figuring perspicuity. For established clergy and their secular apologists, some degree of respect for and training in the ancient languages through which scripture and its hermeneutic history was historically received remained essential to bringing out the intrinsic perspicuity of the scriptures. This dovetails with the cessessionist approach to the problem of false prophecy which we will touch on in the chapter that follows. Launcelot Andrewes, for instance, notes that "at first, to shew the glorie of His greatnesse," Christ "took and imployed *Fishermen*, such as had no bringing up in Schooles. But, it was not long after, but *Learned men* came in apace: *Learned men* of all sorts; Zenas, in *Law*; *Luke*, in *Physique*; *Apollo*, with his *Eloquence*;

[72] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11 ff.

Dionyse, with his *Philosophie*; *S. Paul*, with his *much learning … Which learning … turned not his braines,* nor did them any hurt at all."[73] Where immediate revelation is possible, as in the time of Christ, it is available to all; subsequently, learning is important in disseminating and clarifying the message. Learning is a historical prism, as it were, that makes the divine light visible to human eyes. To this extent, Church of England theology reflected Catholic theological tradition, which has always maintained the necessity of hierarchized and inspired interpretation to make sense of the apparent (but only apparent) obscurities of the Bible. (As Augustine puts it, in the strongest terms, "[One] should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.")[74] But they also mitigated this commitment to hermeneutic authority with a sense that the meaning of scripture, in its origins and still for the most part, is clear to the ordinary understanding. For some of their radical opponents—for Thomas Müntzer, Prophet Hunt, or George Fox—such interjections of tradition were transparently interpretable as attempts to stifle the vitality of the gospel and starve the lay people who harbored true Christianity.

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7. Language and embodiment

This study builds on this critical tradition of understanding enthusiasm's role in the figuration of perspicuity. It sees a common element linking 1) Williamson's observation (later refined by Jones) that neoclassical stylistic perspicuity is defined in opposition to enthusiasm, 2) Vickers' observation that charges of linguistic obscurity and "mere rhetoric" were common to early modern polemics, and 3) Keeble's observation that English Protestants of every confession claimed to understand, interpret, and profess the plain and clear meaning of scripture. I see all of these positions as reflecting dimensions of the central fact that language had special political and

[73] Launcelot Andrewes, *XCVI sermons by the Right Honorable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, late Lord Bishop of Winchester. Published by His Majesties speciall command* (1629), 136. *EEBO.*
[74] Augustine, *The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against the Donatists*, ch. 5, sec. 6. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Series 1, Volume 4, edited by Philip Schaff. Accessed through the *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* online. Hereafter cited as *CCEL.*

theological significance in early modern England, specifically because it was understood to be the medium of revelation. As revelation was contested in Luther's long wake, language was retheorized. The enthusiast offered a vehicle for this retheorization of language vis-à-vis human experience, on one hand, and divinity, on the other. The enthusiast's virtual body, in short, provided a conceptual crucible for thinking about what language is, how it is related to God, and how it can be distorted by the limitations of human embodiment.

I hope it is intuitively clear why the question of how humanity and divinity are linked through language is important for any consideration of prophecy. The prophet works through hearing and speech—and, especially when canonized, through the analogous literary actions of reading and writing. Moreover, the prophet himself is represented as God's conduit or amanuensis. He hears "the word of the LORD," as the Bible so often puts it.[75] And he so often prefaces his exhortations: "thus saith the LORD."[76] And congregants of whatever denomination then hear the word of the LORD through the record of scripture. We will have occasion for further exploration of the importance of the theorization of language for prophecy in the chapters that follow—particularly in the chapter on John Locke. For now, it is important simply to establish that prophecy—a word which literally means "to speak before"—is primarily an aural form.

Thus the crisis of authority represented by the discourse of enthusiasm raises many questions regarding the capacity of language to serve as a conduit for divine messages. While the basic semiotic connection between humanity and divinity is upheld by this discourse, it reframes the nature of this connection. Many important studies have charted the rising emphasis on "the Book of Nature" rather than "the Book of Scripture" in decoding the language of God.[77] My project finds in the discourse of enthusiasm a different—if perhaps complementary—discursive

[75] This phrase appears 274 times in the King James Version.
[76] This phrase appears 815 times in the KJV.
[77] Two books that have been especially important on this link for this project are Harrison, 121-60; and Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

movement which seeks to evacuate the prophetic claims of later saints by clarifying the structure of the speaking body in general. The unlicensed prophet claims to speak for God. The counter-enthusiast purports to explain why this cannot actually be happening—why the enthusiastic body should be understood as closed off from linguistic contact with the divine.

In the works of Henry More, the enthusiast is imagined as a mimetically closed vessel, interacting only with the sensual realm of nature and never allowed to reflect the rational mind of God. The enthusiast is thus mimetically limited to representing only himself. He is configured, to recall the terms used above, as a closed mimetic body. Moreover, he purports to reveal the enthusiast's basic doctrinal tendency to read the whole created universe as a solipsistic allegory of his own existence—thus to privilege his own private incarnation over the Incarnation of the Word in the flesh of Jesus Christ. The enthusiast, in his reading, becomes a mad allegorist recentering Christian typology on his own brief candle.

John Locke approaches the relation between language and embodiment differently. In Book Three of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he generalizes the Adamic theory of language (which traditionally sees things as having an essential correspondence to words, a correspondence discerned by Adam in the prelapsarian state), showing its connection to all human utterance, while at the same time rejecting the essentialist theory of language in favor of the view that most forms of linguistic reference are in fact arbitrary. He thus cuts the magic cord, as it were, linking humanity to Eden through language—and so severs the theoretical basis of enthusiastic authority.

Jonathan Swift treats the relation of embodiment, language, and enthusiasm somewhat differently. He sees the enthusiast as a role one might play on the historical-literary stage, and imagines a war of information between those who appear—whether because they are fools or knaves—to *believe* in innovative theological and philosophical certainties, and those who are able

to indicate that they only provisionally enthusiastic.[78] In Swift's view, some display and exploit a meaningful gap between themselves—their persons—and the enthusiasts they wear in their writings—their personae. Others show no such awareness; they cannot understand, or at least cannot communicate, the distinction. Thus the true enthusiast—that is to say, the false prophet—is a fusion of person and persona. The false enthusiast—that is, in a sense, the true prophet—communicates the gap between who one is and who one appears at various times to be.

These counter-enthusiasms are very different. But they have in common a central concern with refining the inherited understanding of the role of language as a divine medium and its relation to embodied experience. It should also be emphasized that each defines enthusiasm in terms of an insufficient appreciation of the extent to which language is a collective rather than a personal inheritance. For More, the enthusiast narcissistically reads the whole arc of figuration as referring to the self he happens to occupy. For Locke, the enthusiast belatedly and illegitimately reactivates the Adamic charism of world-naming—forgetting that he already exists within a perfectly functional (and indeed indispensable) horizon of conventional meaning. For Swift, the enthusiast fails to notice the degree to which he cannot advocate a position without also stepping into a role—and thus becoming legible as a type. For all three thinkers, to put it plainly, language is bigger than the self. And for all three thinkers, the enthusiast figures the—ridiculous, dangerous—opposite opinion.

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8. Method

Before turning to the historical introduction of the concept of enthusiasm, it would perhaps be helpful to discuss briefly the general methodological approach of this project.

[78] Though I don't emphasize this in the present version of this project, the distinction roughly corresponds to that between moderns and ancients in Swift's conception. Moderns are fusions of person and persona. Ancients keep these distinct.

This is a literary history of a particular concept—enthusiasm—and a set of concepts informing that concept—above all, language, authority, and prophecy. It is a literary history not only because it includes literary figures (above all, Swift) but also because it emphasizes the mimetic, allegorical, and figurative dimensions of this history—dimensions which are generally overlooked or underemphasized in more straightforward intellectual histories of early modern religion. This study is rooted in a period frequently associated not with literature but its absence—the 1640s and 50s in England. I show, as others have done but in a different way, that literary work is far from absent during this period.[79] Indeed, it is absolutely crucial. But it might appear more or less invisible to the literary canon. And this is because, as I mentioned in the above discussion of Auerbach, the mid-century work of literature is involved in the more basic task of representing reality itself, and sorting its dimensions during a time of unprecedented theological, political, and epistemological uncertainty. Literature in this period is thus especially difficult to distinguish from history, philosophy, and theology, and that is paradoxically what makes it such an important moment to study from a literary historical perspective. One sees here literature where the rubber meets the road, as it were.

That said, as I've mentioned, I am certainly indebted to the intellectual histories of enthusiasm that have preceded me—particularly those of Michael Heyd, Ann Taves, Jon Mee, and J.G.A. Pocock. My debts to their lines of thinking—and to those of many others who have covered areas important to this investigation—will be apparent throughout the study that follows. (I introduce these contexts as needed rather than crowd them in at the beginning.)

As this introduction likely makes clear already, this study explicates the creation of a literary discourse—the discourse of enthusiasm—with profound political-theological implications. It draws upon history, but also connects historical evidence to larger conceptual claims regarding

[79] David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric, and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Smith; Achinstein.

the representation of reality. At times I discuss the discourse of enthusiasm in a historical register, as related to particular controversies and events. At other times, I discuss this discourse as a conceptual formation with, as it were, a life of its own that outruns particular historical moments even as it comes to life within them. At times, the discussion here emphasizes the way the discourse is shaped by particular agents—in this study, three profoundly influential writers. At other times, it treats the discourse as a mimetic field bigger than any given writer—as a genre, or a gathering of tropes. (This latter approach, which sees enthusiasm as a discourse that uses writers as much as writers use it, is particularly evident in the following chapter.) This compromise between thinking of the discourse of enthusiasm and the problem of false prophecy which it inflects as either purely historical or purely conceptual is bound to leave many readers unsatisfied. But it aspires to reflect the way that ideas themselves—and this idea, enthusiasm, in particular—have this double quality. They occur in particular moments, but they also bear a general significance to which any given moment and any given conduit must remain blind. The availability of massive searchable databases such as *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*—and this project, as my footnotes will make clear, took root in these databases—helps make this clear in a new way. As Peter de Bolla has recently observed, such resources have the potential not only to continue scholarly trends toward the deconstruction, complication, and specification of the history of ideas—but also to recover and refresh a larger, more general view of past concepts: to locate and trace those ideas (to fall into an older critical idiom) "which attain a wide diffusion, which become a part of the stock of many minds."[80] I have found this to be true, especially when these massive databases are paired with careful close readings of those writers who clearly do shape the discourse consciously and effectively, such that their innovations and refinements become absorbed into subsequent iterations of the idea under

[80] Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 19. Quoted in Peter de Bolla, *The Architecture of Concepts: The Historical Formation of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 12.

examination. The three writers I focus on here are, in my view, among the most important such discourse-changing figures.

Not long ago, Lorraine Daston formulated a view that has subsequently guided my sense of literary historical methodology—or, more specifically, my sense of how to balance historical specificity and conceptual generality in pursuing a historically- and philosophically-informed literary criticism. She noticed the indebtedness of "concepts" not to distinct logical ideas, but to paradoxically coherent entanglements of logically distinct threads.[81] She noticed further that the humanities have grown remarkably adept at detangling the logically distinct threads within concepts—particularly after Foucault—but increasingly less adept at accounting for this paradoxical coherence. Instead, she remarks, people are inclined to treat history as somewhat arbitrary—as "an enormous smorgasbord," in her words, from which one might pick and choose "the epistemic attitudes" one prefers—and to stake their projects on a desire to detach some aspect from a past conceptual whole and transpose it to the present.[82]

One might certainly take issue with this view, but to me it seems to identify correctly an approach to the past widespread in the humanities—particularly in literary studies, which so often stake their importance on the translatability and portability of past representations.[83] Looking back from the present is inevitable. But shifting too quickly between the contexts of the early modern and fully modern centuries without accounting carefully for larger continuities and discontinuities does particular injustice to the former, rendering it at times too simple and at times too complicated. Simplification occurs, for example, when politics and theology or religion

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[81] "History's unions may be less constrained than logic's, but even history cannot arbitrarily recombine elements—otherwise we would have chimeras instead of concepts. A history of objectivity must explain why some ideas and practices melded with one another and others slid away." Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 379.

[82] Daston, Interview with David Cayley, IDEAS, "How to Think about Science," Part 2, CBC Radio, published online January 2, 2009. http://www.cbc.ca/video/news/audioplayer.html?clipid=1479828750 Accessed June 24, 2014.

[83] Consider, for instance, these remarks on political theology: "If, as Carlo Galli argues, political theology is an always incomplete confrontation between two modes, the political and the theological, then how might this moment be thought in the service of new forms of political community, social life, and artistic invention?" Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Introduction," *Political Theology and Early Modernity*, eds. Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3-4.

and secularity are treated as though they must have been "ostensibly discrete" domains or modes in the early modern era, when this was very far from the case.[84] And over-complication occurs, for instance, when the emphasis on the varieties of religious experience in the past effaces the common ground upon which faiths clashed—specifically, as I will argue, on the status of revelation. We can better understand where we are now with regard to political theology when we recognize the broader horizon against which the various apparently discrete views of More, Locke, and Swift—and, although I cannot develop these connections at length in the present project, Hobbes, Spinoza, Milton, and many well-known and lesser-known thinkers—respond to this one coherent problem, indeed, this problem *about* the coherence of the world and the status of totality: the problem of prophecy. This might not help us to assemble a preferred secular ethics, but it should help to elucidate some the missed conversations we see every day in the contemporary world. In other words, it might help us to account not for the present that we would prefer to experience, but the present that we are experiencing.

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9. Overview

In this project, I establish that the discourse of enthusiasm consistently did two things. First, it pathologized its polemical target, the self-authorized prophet, who became known as "the enthusiast." Second, it imitated this target, recovering in an ironized form the spiritual authority it appeared on the first level to discredit. The enthusiast was thus a puppet effigy of a false prophet which was, in the same polemical motion, rhetorically rehabilitated in complex ways by many writers identified now with the literary culture of the English enlightenment. Although the three counter-enthusiasms I look at in this study are remarkably varied, they share this double-structure. They not only polemicize, but also provisionally reinhabit the enthusiast.

[84] Hammill and Lupton, 2.

In the chapter that follows, I offer an historical account of the discourse of enthusiasm as it emerges from and transforms the discourse of heresy from the early English Reformation (specifically, from the 1539 publication of the first legal English Bible) to the mid-seventeenth century. The next three chapters examine particular—and particularly influential—counter-enthusiasts. As mentioned, each counter-enthusiasm works on two basic levels. First, the enthusiast is defined and delimited. Second, some version of the enthusiast is rehabilitated. In describing the counter-enthusiasm of Henry More, I emphasize, first, his way of provisionally appropriating materialist perspectives in order to despiritualize unlicensed prophets; second, I examine his positive enthusiasm of Incarnation—where the spiritual capacity of language is connected not to one's own flesh, but to the Word made flesh. I then turn to John Locke, whose theory of language is designed to address the problem of popular spiritual authority at the root—by de-essentializing language and trivializing the Adamic word. But again Locke has a positive enthusiasm as well—which comes out in his paraphrase of Paul's Epistles, which I read as an extension and qualification of his work on language in the *Essay*. Finally, I consider Jonathan Swift. I identify in Swift's work two satirical approaches the enthusiasm—the first (and best known) of which travesties the enthusiast, the second of which finds in ironic imitations of enthusiasm a capacity to communicate prophetically, to reach his readers, to connect. An epilogue considers the longer legacy of the discourse of enthusiasm and its importance in particular for the ensuing ambivalence regarding the capacity of language to act as a vehicle for truth in later enlightenment traditions of liberalism.

2. WHAT WAS ENTHUSIASM?

> The audacity of your mad
> belief resembles that of the
> child who devises a monster
> and then afterward fears it.
> -Sor Juana[85]

1. The Heretical Paradigm

In 1539, plagued with uprisings both real and threatened in the wake of his rupture from the Roman Catholic Church, Henry VIII finally legalized the English Bible and required that it be chained to a rostrum in every church in his kingdom. The text of this Bible was largely the work of William Tyndale, who in 1524 had fled Henry's anti-Protestant England for the Low Countries, where by 1526 he had illegally translated the New Testament from Erasmus' Greek into English. In 1530 he published an English Pentateuch from the Hebrew.[86] Between 1526 and 1566, over forty editions of Tyndale's scriptures, three authoritative and the rest pirated, were printed at Worms and Antwerp and then smuggled into the English market between 1526 and 1566.[87] Tyndale died, as is well known, in 1536, having been apprehended by Henry's spies, tried, strangled with a chain (a sign of respect afforded a scholar), and then burned at the stake.[88] The works bearing Tyndale's name remained illegal long after his words were licensed to be uttered in English churches; indeed, owning any of them, including the scripture translations, was a capital crime.[89] At the same time, refusing to accept the legitimacy of the English Testaments he helped produce, by 1539 incorporated into a massive folio called the Great Bible, was, if not punishable by death, still punishable.[90]

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[85] Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, "Redondilla 92" (ll. 13-16), *Selected Works*, translated by Edith Grossman (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), 34.
[86] David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 382.
[87] Alfred William Pollard, ed., *Records of the English Bible: The Documents Relating to the Translation and Publication of the Bible in English, 1525-1611* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1911), 3 ff.
[88] Daniell, 156.
[89] Albert Pleysier, *Henry VIII and the Anabaptists* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2014), 46.
[90] See Cranmer's Preface to the Great Bible.

It is very unlikely Henry would have seen any irony in these events. He had finally broken from the Church of Rome with the 1534 Act of Supremacy. Thereafter he imagined himself to be the sole legitimate conduit for scripture in England. In 1536 he opposed the translation of the Bible. In 1539 he endorsed it. His will was the spigot controlling the flow of the Holy Spirit into English ears and minds. He had graciously turned the spigot on—but he reserved the right to turn it off again whenever he wished.

This attitude is expressly represented in the well-known frontispiece of the Great Bible, which imagines King Henry as the divinely-appointed distributer of the *Verbum Dei*—the Word of God. (See figure 2.1 in appendix.) On Henry's right, ecclesiastical viceroys of the newly established Church of England receive the Word from Henry and preach it to a thankful mass of people—most of whom are declaring, rather oddly in Latin, "Vivat Rex!" (Latin appears still to have been understood to be the more efficacious language of spirit.) Two of the subjects English this: "God Save the Kynge!" The sermon text unspooling from the mouth of the preacher is from 1 Timothy 2, which exhorts the people to pray for and thank "kynges, and for all that are in auctorite, that we maye lyve a quyet peaceable lyfe, wyth all Godlynes and honestye."[91] On Henry's left, secular politicians likewise receive the Word. As one follows the story of their power down the page, one finds that it instills less jubilation in the unhappy subjects stowed in the prison at the bottom of the secular side. The symbolism is clear. Henry is God's intermediary on earth. Indeed, one can see him in the upper right hand corner actually talking to God, receiving a prophetic charge. Henry derives from his special status as God's viceroy authority over both spiritual and worldly matters. He has been divinely appointed England's monopolist of both legitimate violence, symbolized in the prison, and legitimate prophetic representation of God's

[91] The translation of 1 Tim 2.2 is from the Great Bible (1540 edition). This provides an occasion to show how influential Tyndale's rendering of the Bible was. Compare the KJV: "For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Will, symbolized in the pulpit. He is the source of righteous fear within this world, and deferential hope for another.

Indeed, the symbolism of the Great Bible—among many other possible examples—illustrates clearly the interdependent nature of the late feudal monopolies of legitimation in England. The monopolies on doctrine, revelation, and violence support one another. These three monopolies hold up the polity like the three legs of a stool—on top of which Henry is comfortably perched.

That, at least, was how it was supposed to work in theory. In practice, as is well known, the English Reformation—like most European Reformations—was vexed, bloody, protracted, and profoundly destabilizing for the existing medieval culture.[92] Signs of troubles to come are not hard to find even in this very early document of the Church of England. In his Preface to the Great Bible, Thomas Cranmer identifies two signs of danger: on the one hand, traditionalist grumblers who obstruct the reading the Bible out of respect for (in his terms) "custom," whom he exhorts to obey their king and read their Bible for the good of their souls; on the other, those who take the privilege of reading scripture too far, who exhibit hermeneutical "licentiousness."[93] Eamon Duffy and others have studied the unsettling effect of the English Reformation on the first sort—the Catholic English who find their allegiances torn between king and pope.[94] This chapter will concentrate on the second sort—the licentious readers who will be recast, by the mid-seventeenth century, as "enthusiasts."

Cranmer's warning in the Great Bible already displays a number of the tropes, motifs, and themes that will build the discourse of enthusiasm for decades to come. For example, the warning is cast in quasi-medical terms of purity and danger, albeit rather in a Levitical than (as

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[92] For a classic account of this dimension of the English Reformation, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).
[93] Thomas Cranmer, "A Prologue or Preface Made By the Most Reverend Father in God, Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury Metropolitan and Primate of England," in *The Great Bible* (1540 ed.). Accessed through archive.org, June 17, 2014. Spelling modernized.
[94] Duffy, passim.

will be common later) a Galenic register.[95] For Cranmer, "inordinate reading, undiscrete speaking, conscientious disputing" and "licentious living" are all of a piece. In the right dosage and taken in the right devotional attitude, Scripture is "the most healthful medicine." But just as medicines become poisons when wrongly administered, so too the scripture can cause damage when placed in impure hands and mouths. "[F]or it is dangerous," Cranmer writes, "for the unclean to touch that thing that is most clean: like as the sore eye taketh harm by looking upon the sun." Only those "of exact and exquisite judgments," who have "spent their time before in study and contemplation"—i.e. those trained in theology at Oxford or Cambridge—are fit to interpret the Word. The layperson ought rather to receive it, "showing himself to be a sober and fruitful hearer and learner, which if he do, he shall prove at the length well able to teach, though not with his mouth, yet with his living and good example, which is sure the most lively and most effectuous form and manner of teaching." Cranmer sums up his anti-licentious hermeneutics succinctly: "I forbid not to read, but I forbid to reason. Neither forbid I to reason so far as is good and godly. But I allow not that is done out of season, and out of measure and good order."[96]

As I will suggest in this chapter, one can see here the pulling apart of two paradigms. On the one hand, it is forbidden to reason. Any private thoughts—opinions, i.e. heresies—that interfere with the transmission and understanding of the Word of God are to be resisted, confessed, purged. On the other, it is forbidden to reason "out of season." Reasoning is allowed—but only in certain circumstances. It must be a controlled reasoning. This is, in brief, the difference between the heretical and enthusiastic paradigms for identifying false prophetic strains within the body politic. On the one hand, opinions are not admissible. Any opinion is a mark of prideful distance from the divine truth. (One might think of Dante's sinful opinionizing

[95] The phrase comes from Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Purity and Taboo* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).
[96] Cranmer, "A Prologue or Preface."

in hell, where he feels pity for the suffering damned. Virgil admonishes him: "Qui vive la pietà quand' è ben morta"—as translated by Dorothy Sayers, "Here pity, or here piety, must die."[97] One must give up one's own thoughts and conform to the divine will.) On the other, opinions are admissible. But they must be adjudged "good," "godly," "seasonable," "measured," "orderly." They must reflect a balanced and proper piety. One might say—they must be properly formulated, delimited, state-accredited. Where the heretical paradigm imagines the subjectivity of the believer as participating in a divine totality to which it either conforms or doesn't conform, the enthusiastic paradigm imagines the utterance as an occasion to decide whether or not the subjectivity that gives it egress has properly situated this given thought within the divine balance of wholes. In the one, the believer's mind is microcosmic. The mind must be controlled. In the other, the utterance is microcosmic. The word must be controlled. These are, traditionally, from Aristotle forward, the two sides of logos—thoughts within, and thoughts (i.e. words) without the mind.[98] The heresy paradigm emphasizes the former, enthusiasm the latter.

Cranmer frames his concerns about licentious reading as a matter of pastoral care. He simply doesn't want any of his parishioners harmed —and their salvation jeopardized—by improper hermeneutical conduct. Their sore eyes must be shielded from too much sun. But quite soon after the licensed publishing of the English Bible it became clear that the potential ramifications for established power of the widespread availability of popular scripture involved

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[97] Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Part 1: Hell*, trans. Dorothy Sayers (London: Penguin, 1949), 20.28. "Pietà" can mean both "pity" and "piety," hence Sayers' elegant solution.

[98] The nineteenth-century scholar Charles Ellicott gives a brief account of logos in his commentary on John 1 that should be useful here: "The nearest English derivative is 'Logic,' which is from an adjective derived from *logos*; and we understand by it, not an art or science which has to do with words, but one which has to do with thought and reason. The Greeks used *logos* in both senses, and Aristotle (*Poster. Anal.* i.10) found it necessary to distinguish between the 'logos within' (thought) and the 'logos without' (speech). The Stoics introduced the phrase *logos endiathetos* (*verbum mentis*) for 'thought,' and *logos prophorikos* (*verbum oris*) for 'speech'; and these phrases were made prominent in the language of theology by Philo Judæus. The term, then, is two-sided, and the English term 'Word' not only fails altogether to approach the meaning of the 'logos within' (*verbum mentis*), but it also fails to represent the most important part of that side of the meaning which it does approach; for the 'logos without' (*verbum oris*) is speech or discourse, rather than the detached 'word.'" Ellicott's commentary can be found at http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/john/1.htm. Accessed July 10, 2014.

much more than a few lost sheep. It involved the possibility of whole lost flocks—of new basic understandings of political legitimacy, and of the explosion of the state monopoly on revelation.

As a case in point, consider Thomas Bonner, the Bishop of London at the time of the publication of the Great Bible.[99] Bonner's initial support for the Great Bible was such that he far exceeded Henry's order that at least one copy be made publically available to each congregation. He privately purchased six Great Bibles for St. Paul's Cathedral and had them chained to reading pulpits situated throughout the church. Faced with a laity eager to exploit his generosity, Bonner soon found it necessary to clarify the terms under which these Bibles could be used. Above each chained copy of the Great Bible he posted "An admonition and advertisement." Echoing Cranmer, Bonner insisted that only the pure and meek should approach the Word:

> [R]ight expedient, yeah, necessary it shall be also that leaving behind him vainglory, hypocrisy, and all other carnal and corrupt affections, he bring with him discretion, honest intent, charity, reverence, and quiet behavior […] Evermore foreseeing that no number of people be specially congregate therefore, to make a multitude. And that no exposition be made thereupon, otherwise than it is declared in the book it self.[100]

Bonner, in line with Cranmer but showing more urgency, subscribes to something like a Donatism of the laity: only the pure may read, and only in such a way as to avoid gathering to themselves congregations, whether through oratorical or hermeneutical brilliance.

The admonition does not appear to have worked. At least one member of Bonner's congregation, John Porter, died after being arrested for preaching in too distressing a manner. As John Foxe writes: "[G]reat multitudes would resort thither to hear this Porter, because he could read well and had an audible voice. […] Bonner then laid unto his charge, that he had made

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[99] For a perspective on Bonner's role in the early Reformation that is more sympathetic than usual, see Mark Anthony Newcomb, *The Ark and the Covenant: Edmund Bonner and Nicholas Ridley on Ecclesiology and the Promotion of Scripture in Sixteenth-century England.* PhD dissertation, Fordham University. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2008. (Publication No. 3310421.), 37ff.

[100] Bonner's Advertisement reprinted in Margaret Aston, "Lap Books and Lectern Books," in *The Church and the Book: Papers read at the 2000 Summer Meeting and the 2001 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R.N. Swanson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2004), 181.

exposition upon the text, and gathered great multitudes about him to make tumults."[101] Bonner sent Porter to Newgate, where he was further roughly handled for preaching the gospel to the other prisoners. Within a week of his imprisonment, he was dead. Margaret Aston, among other historians, has recommended that Foxe's narrative be taken with a grain of salt. She notes that Bonner's grievance against Porter was more likely that he read the gospel during church services than that he read it at all; indeed, it seems that more than a few "Gospellers" of the 1540s took pride in reading the word of God "while ye read in the quire the pope's service and the devil's service" (in the words of William Turner).[102] But this only clarifies the conflict that emerged quickly upon the introduction of the vernacular Bible to churches. The available word of God became widely understood not as a supplement to established hermeneutics but a replacement or challenge to a theology at once brand new and still rooted in the Latin mass. The Bible threatened to render the church superfluous.

Certain orthodox theologians—whom we might now call "conservative," though neither that term nor its usual antonyms ("progressive," "liberal," and "radical") fit comfortably into the post-Reformation theological-political milieu—had long seen this coming. Following the licensing of the English Bible, for instance, Stephen Gardiner, who would become Mary I's Lord Chancellor, observed in horror that every English reader of the Bible is potentially "a church alone." Cuthbert Tunstall, the Bishop of Durham, reportedly muttered around the same time, "They will see what we do."[103] The ambiguity in this phrase is irresistible. Put the emphasis on *do*, and Tunstall appears anxious that "they," the laity, will have unmediated access to the practices that confer authority. Put the emphasis on *we*, and he appears worried that they will discern the secret of politics—that political legitimacy is less a divine creation than a human invention.

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[101] John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edition), Book 8, p. 1420. This is the earliest edition of the *Acts and Monuments* in which this story appears. Accessed through the wonderful *John Foxe's The Acts and Monuments Online*, www.johnfoxe.org.

[102] Aston, 182.

[103] Both citations can be found in David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 173. The discussion of the reception of the Bible in this book is consistently illuminating.

Within a few years of furnishing his churches with Great Bibles, Henry VIII had seen enough. In the Act for the Advancement of True Religion (May 1543), he declared:

> [M]any seditious people, arrogant and ignorant persons whereof some pretending to be learned, and to have the perfect and true knowledge, understanding and judgment of the sacred and holy scriptures, and some other of their perverse, froward and malicious minds, wills and intents, intending to subvert the very true and perfect expositions, doctrine, and declaration of the said scripture, after their perverse fantasies: have taken upon them, not only to preach, teach, declare, and set forth the same by words, sermons, disputations, and arguments, but also by printed books, printed ballads, plays, rhymes, songs, and other fantasies, subtily and craftily instructing his highness' people, and especially the youth of this his realm, untruly and otherwise than the scripture ought or should be taught, declared or expounded and contrary to the very sincere, and godly meaning of the same.[104]

Not only, then, were English people reading the Bible with loud and high voices; they were using that amplifier of amplifiers, the printing press, to promulgate their interpretations and to mingle the holy words of scripture with baser human inventions in "ballads, plays, rhymes, songs, and other fantasies." Here was the nightmare complete: the pure language of scripture rendered impure by mixture with popular forms. In fact, the scripture had been used in popular literatures and plays for centuries without incident, as attested by the tradition of Corpus Christi plays. But clearly such interpolations were taking on a new meaning. They were increasingly understood not to reflect sovereign authority but to foment an alternative form of religious legitimacy—what I will call popular prophetic authority. Faced with this harrowing development, Henry promptly banned the Great Bible. He further banned all private Bibles—with the often-noticed proviso

[104] *Statutes of the Realm*, ed. A. Luders et al., 11 vols (1810-28), 3:896 (34-35 Henry VIII, c.1).

that nobles and householders, i.e. those who owned property, could continue to read their Bibles quietly at home.

And so, just as he reserved the right to do, Henry revoked the access he had previously allowed. And his son Edward reinstated it. And his daughter Mary revoked it. And his daughter Elizabeth reinstated it. But whatever the state position of the moment vis-à-vis the laity and scripture, the major theological-political problem of the next century and a half had been clearly established. Through widespread access to the vernacular scriptures, England was poised to become Milton's "Nation of Prophets."[105] The divine legitimacy once enjoyed by great arteries of church and state would now be divided among countless capillaries—lay preachers, local prophets, religious ballad-makers, unlicensed sermon-makers.

This is not by any means to claim that all English readers of the Bible were so hermeneutically licentious. Many were good readers in Cranmer's sense: quiet cultivators of better, healthier interiorities. Many preferred praying at home to prophesying in the aisles. But those who did claim license to preach and interpret the Word found thereby an instantaneous legitimacy—a means to draw upon the wellsprings of a power the established church and state were absolutely bound to recognize, at some level, to which they were committed by a thousand years of tradition. The Word of God could not but be true. It had to be defended at the same time that it opened the state to civil attack from within. This was the vulnerable point in the legitimation schema that had seemed to work so well for so long—and was now turned against those whose institutional order was predicated upon it.

One event that must be understood in this context is the English Civil War—often characterized by historians as the last "war of religion."[106] This is not to say that there are not

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[105] Milton, *Areopagitica*, in *Complete Prose Works* Vol 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 554.

[106] "The English civil war was not the first European revolution: it was the last of the Wars of Religion." John Morrill, "The Religious Context of the English Civil War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984): 178. Cf. Pocock, "Enthusiasm": "[T]he Wars of Religion did not, as conventionally supposed, end at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, but were continued past that date in various forms. This enables us to treat the War of the Three Kingdoms,

many economic and social reasons for the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, of which England's civil wars of the 1640s were a part. But these motivations found in the question of who owns the Word of God—and of the relative role of pastors and flock in the spiritual distribution of God's Word—more than a spark. It also found continual fuel. Consider the story—told almost inevitably in any account of Presbyterian history—of Jenny Geddes. True or not, its literary features help capture the centrality of the question of the Word for the unstable political order of the 1630s. As the tale goes, Geddes objected to the first reading of the 1637 Book of Common Prayer at St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh. When the priest began to read from this book, she hurled a stool at him and said, "De'il gie you colic, the wame o' ye, fause thief! Daur ye say Mass in my lug?"[107] Other versions have Geddes object not to the preacher, but to a fellow congregant who was obediently repeating the liturgy when she struck him with a Bible before uttering her famous sentence. At any rate, this sparked a riot among the congregants and led to the re-establishment of the Church of Scotland on the basis of Presbyterianism—the first major event, as is well known, in the series of civil conflicts that would occupy the British Isles for the next decade and more.

Not in my lug. This encapsulates the central issue—who gets to pour, through my ear, the conditioning logos of my mind? Who regulates logos without, and hence logos within? That Geddes' ear is inevitably represented in the Scot original—lug—illustrates the importance of the vernacular in this moment of defiance. For many Presbyterians, English was to Scots as for radical English Protestants Latin was to English. And Geddes, like Prophet Hunt in the last chapter, thus refuses to hear the word in the dead letter of a dead language, preferring its living sense of her own tongue. She imagines prophecy, the transmission of spirit, not as a special

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of which the English Civil War was a part, as a war of religion" (9). See also Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 48 ff., 185 ff.

[107] Translated into English, the sentence reads, "Devil cause you colic in your stomach, false thief: dare you say the Mass in my ear?" See David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637-44* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 42-64.

activity of the past, but as a continuous experience in the present. Her ear—her lug—is thus not unlike Mary's ear when it catches the conceiving voice of the angel. Her protests express a wish that her ear, too, and hence her conceptions, might be made holy.

The notion of the living word of prophetic protest, then, is highly productive for Presbyterians and other radical Protestants. For the established institutions of power, though, it is foundationally destabilizing. The prior paradigm that could rely on a hierarchical transmission of doctrine, in a holy and elite tongue, from God into the layperson's head—that is, the heretical paradigm, which interpreted any resistant twitching of opinion within the lay worshipper in terms of a Satanic irritant to be purged—clearly needed to be reconceived from the bottom up.

In the rest of this chapter, I outline some of the forms this construction took. I emphasize forms that are particularly relevant to the discussion of the three counter-enthusiasts that follows: the enthusiast as original sinner, the enthusiast as irrational prophet, the enthusiast as infectious rhetor, the enthusiast as pagan, the enthusiast as inspired poet, and the enthusiast as chamber of wonders. These are not the only possible emphases. One might, for instance, more centrally feature the enthusiast as witch, or the enthusiast as natural philosopher. Part of the point of this rehearsal is not to exhaust the figure, but to show how many varieties of this figuration there are, and how many ways it has been emphasized. The emphases I've chosen will hopefully prove helpful for contextualizing the more in-depth readings that follow.

Moreover, this approach supports the general thesis of this chapter—which I focus on in the last section but which is evident throughout: the enthusiast should be understood in this early form of the discourse as a limited totality. The figure works to represent forms of belief that seem total, but which are revealed by the discourse to be partial. Another way of putting this, the enthusiast is represented as wanting to be seen as a special portal to God, a vehicle of revelation; he is revealed by the discourse to be, on the contrary, just one bee in a swarm of similar "singularities." In a sense, the discourse cannot decide which dimension to emphasize, or which

is more horrible—the enthusiast's monstrous uniqueness, or his total anonymity. I will suggest that the figure thus offers a means of representing the difference between, in the terms of rationalization, subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

As a final introductory thought, it is worth emphasizing that one of these nodes of the discourse of enthusiasm is unlike the others, and so warrants special attention at the outset. Whereas most of the tropes of enthusiasm are polemical in nature, there does persist throughout the seventeenth century a strain of the discourse associated with poetic inspiration which is not polemical—which is, indeed, valorized. I situate this as one part of the "pagan" discourse of enthusiasm toward the close of this chapter, as the "inspired poet" strain. It is significant for the project as a whole not just insofar as it complicates an otherwise negative discourse, but also in that it suggests the degree to which enthusiasm was from its inception available for the conceptualization of a form of meaningful expression and communication—not necessarily divine, but still prophetic. This positive form of enthusiasm was also, from its inception, marked by classism and elitism. It was associated with classical prestige derived from Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, and other authorities.

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3. The enthusiast as original sinner

Consider the Anabaptist Thomas Müntzer. In his 1521 *Prague Protest*, Müntzer writes: "Like a stork that gobbles up frogs in the fields and ponds and then afterwards spits them out, just as raw, to its young in the nest…so, too, are the profit-seeking and interest-boosting parsons who gobble whole the dead words of Scripture and then spit out the letter and their inexperienced faith (which is not worth a louse) to the righteous, poor, poor people."[108] According to Müntzer's radical vision, "pitch-smeared parsons" and "donkey-fart doctors of theology" might hoard up the Word of God in their stork-like beaks. But they do not digest it.

[108] Thomas Müntzer, *Revelation and Revolution: Basic Writings of Thomas Müntzer*, translated by Michael G. Baylor (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1993), 56.

They do not experience "the living speech of God," here imagined as still-living frogs ready to be devoured by the stork's poor nestlings.[109] Similar images of scriptural vitality nurtured within a desiccated vessel emerge later in the treatise, most strikingly in Müntzer's comparison of theologians to "scrotums" who carry the "marrow, juice, force, and power" of the "living word out of the mouth of God" without letting it penetrate them and return, refreshed, to the world.[110] Müntzer's excoriation of the priesthood frequently picks up images of idolatry. Licensed parsons are "wooden," "stone," "dust," and "rubble."[111] They are "diarrhea-makers" who "have taught the people to pray to Baal."[112] Likewise, he draws for poor, uneducated Christians associations resonant with unfulfilled communion. Citing Jeremiah 4.4, he writes, "The children have prayed for bread and there was no one there to break it for them."[113] Later he asks, "Do we lack blood in our body and life that affairs proceed in such a mad and stupid way?"[114]

Müntzer's point is simple. He understands Bible interpretation as an encounter between text and reader—without an intervening hierarchy of priests to get in the way. To be properly understood, the Word of God must come alive within the believer. It must be felt. As he writes, "Does one not feel at least a small spark that virtually seeks to expand into tinder? Indeed, one feels it and I feel it too."[115] It must wriggle—like a living frog. And, most significantly, one must respond to this wriggling actively—by digesting the word into one's own language. One must produce from one's experience of the holy word revelations—inspired redigestions, rearrangements, typological repurposings. "The office of the true shepherd," Müntzer writes, "is simply that the sheep should all be led to revelations and revived by the living voice of God."[116] The Word of God itself has not suffered for its Babylonian confinement in the beaks of storks. It

[109] Müntzer, 57.
[110] Müntzer, 57.
[111] Müntzer, 58.
[112] Müntzer, 59.
[113] Müntzer, 56.
[114] Müntzer, 58.
[115] Müntzer, 58-59.
[116] Müntzer, 57.

remains as raw and vital as ever. And it is time, finally, to let its vitality mingle with and contribute to one's own. For Müntzer, this form of personal hermeneutic practice does not distort the text. It reveals its meaning. Indeed, how can one exclude oneself from the interpretive process? How can one pretend not to be present, as it were, when the Word of God is uttered? How can one hear and say these holy words and feel nothing?

But for Martin Luther, who violently opposes Müntzer, the problem is not that one feels or hears the spirit. That is perfectly laudable. The problem is that they then speak their sense of the spirit, taking the external word of God, mixing it up in the self, and returning it to the world as a new external word—now corrupted by the enthusiast's own interiority. As he writes in the *Smalcald Articles*: "We must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may [thus] be protected against the enthusiasts, *i.e.*, spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word, and accordingly judge Scripture or the spoken Word, and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Müntzer did, and many still do at the present day, who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet know not what they say or declare."[117] It is important to note that for Luther the "spoken Word" is not the human word. It is the Word of God—not only as written in Scripture, but also as written into the world, into the heart of the faithful. It is the Word that was with God in the beginning, according to the opening of the Gospel of John. It is an external Word—a force from without the self, which reveals to the self at once one's infinite helplessness to transact one's own salvation, and one's dependence upon a loving and forgiving creator. Enthusiasts like Müntzer, according to Luther, shut their ears to this Word and replace it with

[117] Martin Luther, *The Smalcald Articles* 3.8, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, translated by Charles P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

their own human words—their own selfish interpretations of divine mysteries. They center the Bible—and thus the church—on their own fleshly selves.[118]

And in this, Luther continues, they are no better than the Pope. He writes, "The Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commands within his church is spirit and right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken Word." Just as the Pope is just a human being who has set up his peculiar interpretation of scripture for the truth, so too each enthusiast is a miniature Pope seeking the same unholy privilege. Still more foundationally, he interprets enthusiasm as coextensive with original sin: "All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit." The false substitution of the outward for the inward word, of private interpretation of God's speech, encouraged by the serpent commences the fall from God's presence—"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3.5). Enthusiasm, in short, is worship of one's own words in a state of ignorance of God's Word.

As is clear, then, for Luther, enthusiasm is not simply a symptom of a deeper social or political problem. It is a symptom of the human condition—a sign of our fallenness, our distance from the divine, our tendency to see the world through the dark window of our own desires and emotions. Although all heresies lead, eventually, via their peculiar byways, to "the old devil and the old serpent," this is especially true of enthusiasm. It is the first heresy. In some ways, it is the heresy intrinsic to human existence—the reliance upon the self, and the setting up of the self for a substitute god. (We will see in the chapter that follows how important this line of argument is to Henry More.)

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[118] Cf. "Neo-Protestantism [i.e. radical reformed approaches like Müntzer's] fundamentally misunderstood Luther's emphasis on the indispensability of the external Word, which is enacted in the sermon and the sacrament." Jeffrey G. Silcock, "Luther on the Holy Spirit and His Use of God's Word," in Robert Kolb and Irene Dingel, editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 299. For a thorough overview of recent and classic scholarship in the general area of Luther's hermeneutics, see Kolb and Dingel, 127-69.

In denouncing enthusiasm, Luther notes a paradox that many others will pick up on—though not always in the spirit he intended. He writes that enthusiasts claim to receive revelations themselves, but that these are only "accomplished this through other outward words." In short, there is no *true* inward word. All words are echoes of words taken in from outside. The external word is the only word—and all words one uses oneself are derived from some original language one obviously did not create. Enthusiasts merely fool themselves into treating such words as their own—falsely laying hold on what can never be one's own. For Luther, this is an open-and-shut difference between the Christianity he is preaching, which begins and ends in utter submission to God, and that preached by self-proclaimed prophets of Anabaptist sects or self-proclaimed priests of the papacy. To others, as will be immediately obvious from the vantage of the passage of centuries, the distinction is not so clear. All Christian denominations then and now preach submission to God. So do almost all monotheistic religious groups. All believers, then, claim to be evaporated in the searing power of the divine spirit—to be nothing but vessels for the truth. This is no less true of Luther than it is of Müntzer, and (in one of the many recapitulations of this contrast a century later) no less true of John Donne than it is of George Fox. Thus Luther's objection might be leveraged against Luther himself. Why is his "external Word" not also an internal word—not also, that is, a private interpretation? On what external grounds are such internal determinations possible?

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4. The enthusiast as belated

One solution that emerged among reformers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the view evoked by the phrase, "the age of miracles," understood as distinct from "the present age."[119] According to this perspective, prophecy was a real presence from the creation of the

[119] This idea has many precedents, most obviously the Judaic tradition that identifies Malachi as the last prophet before the Messiah to come. See, e.g., Talmud, Sanhedrin 11a. The notion appears to have been relatively codified by the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. See D.P. Walker, "The Cessation of Miracles," in Ingrid Merkel and

world to the time of Christ—through the period when the scriptures were written down. Since the time of Christ's apostles, it has not been necessary, and so has ceased. As Hobbes puts it:

> Seeing therefore miracles now cease, we have no sign left whereby to acknowledge the pretended revelations or inspirations of any private man; nor obligation to give ear to any doctrine, farther than it is conformable to the Holy Scriptures, which since the time of our Saviour supply the place and sufficiently recompense the want of all other prophecy; and from which, by wise and learned interpretation, and careful ratiocination, all rules and precepts necessary to the knowledge of our duty both to God and man, without enthusiasm, or supernatural inspiration, may easily be deduced.[120]

Hobbes' deductions from scripture—namely, that only the sovereign can justly interpret its meaning—might have been controversial. His sense that spiritual things *then* were not as they are *now*, however, was not. Indeed, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed many popular variations on this notion—from Milton's virtuosic updating of Plutarch's account of the cessation of oracles in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," to Defoe's sardonic suggestion, in *The Political History of the Devil*, that Satan doesn't need to appear in the flesh anymore, because people have grown so evil that they will do his dirty work for nothing.

But the idea that there is a historical difference between the age of miracles and the present age did not do much to curtail the problem of popular spiritual authority. For one thing, heterodox believers fully agreed that spiritual life was different in the times of the first churches; they merely saw themselves as participants in the reawakening of this former, primitive spirit, which they took to have been long dormant and now moving once more. (This was true in particular of the Diggers and the Quakers, and in general of many radical dissenting groups.)[121]

Allen G. Debus, editors, *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* (Washington, D.C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), 114-24.

[120] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Revised Edition*, edited by A.P. Martinich and Brian Battiste (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2010), 320.

[121] See Geoffrey Nuttall, "Messianic Language in Early Quakerism," in *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 181 ff.

For another, orthodox believers were still confronted with the problem of the Holy Spirit as a continuously present tether to the divine. Jesus promises his followers "another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," whom he identifies as "the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Jn 14.16-17). The age of direct miracles might have ceased; but what, then, is this promised spirit of truth, which one can only discern within oneself? How does it pass from God to the human soul? And how is this passing not prophetic—not, thus, a continuation of the prophetic dispensation?

Many Church of England theologians answered these questions by way of an emphasis on proper hermeneutic comportment. As Jeremy Taylor puts it:

> Gods Spirit did assist the Apostles by wayes extraordinary, and fit for the first institution of Christianity: but doth assist us now by the expresses of those first assistances which he gave to them immediately. So that the holy Ghost is the author of our faith, and we beleeve with the spirit (it is Saint *Pauls* expression) and yet our beliefe comes by hearing and reading the holy Scriptures and their interpretations. Now reconcile these two together, Faith comes by hearing, and yet is the gift of the Spirit, and it sayes, that the gifts of the Spirit are not extasies, and immediate infusions of habits, but helps from God to enable us upon the use of the meanes of his owne appointment to beleeve, to speak, to understand, toprophecy [i.e. preach], and to pray.[122]

For Taylor, inspiration is no longer immediate, as it needed to have been for the "first institution of Christianity." All spirit now, for Taylor, is mediated by the scriptures. It must be cultivated by reflection (and thus the discourse in which this passage appears is a defense of liturgical forms of prayer over ex tempore preaching). It must be actively believed, understood, and accepted. The

[122] Jeremy Taylor, *A discourse concerning prayer ex tempore, or, by pretence of the spirit. In justification of authorized and set-formes of lyturgie* (1642), 6-7. *EEBO*.

spirit will help—but the believer must perceive and accept this help. This is a patient, disciplined hermeneutics of cultivated and refined reading habits.[123]

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4. The enthusiast as irrational

Alongside this emphasis on disciplined hermeneutic comportment—which was reinforced in all the major established theologians, from Cranmer to Hooker to Donne—there emerged a polemical caricaturing and rejection of the opposite. Ecstasies, "immediate infusions," frenzies, extemporaneous exhortations—all of these spiritual activities were associated with madness and fraud. And this was true not only of contemporary theological behavior. It was back-projected into the long history of revelation. Moses, Elijah, and even prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel who were apparently prone to ecstatic experience, at least if one reads their prophetic books literally, were recast as serene, self-aware conduits of divine messages. This discourse was inherited, on one hand, from the rational theological traditions of Maimonides and Aquinas, and on the other, from the political theology of witchcraft, which similarly distinguished between rational, masculine prophets of God, and irrational, feminine witches and sorcerers.[124] As Jean Bodin puts it in *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580), "[C]eux, qui sont inspirez des Daemos, sont alors les plus furieux et insensez, et ceux qui sont inspirez de Dieu, sont alors plus sages que iamais" (24).[125] The man of God—and with emphasis here on *man*—is in his right senses, and speaks wisdom calmly. This is why, Bodin continues, the ancient Hebrews did not distinguish between sages and prophets: because prophecy, when justly divine, instills sagacity. On the

[123] A number of critics have stressed this dimension of reformed hermeneutics. See, e.g., Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); John Knott, *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Dayton Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[124] In *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides conceives of prophecy as a divine emanation gifted to those who have perfect physical, moral, and mental fitness. He sees prophecy, thus, as equally engaging the intellect and the imagination. The prophet is the final evolution of the sage. This view was very influential among scholastic philosophers, most importantly Aquinas. See Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy?" *AJS Review* 3 (1978): 1-19.

[125] Jean Bodin, *Démonomanie* (1593 edition), 24. Accessed using www.archive.org.

contrary, the sibyls—and, by analogy, the witches, and (later) the enthusiasts—prophesy only in possession and fury. We will explore some of the ramifications of this contrast of feminine sibyls and masculine "true prophets" below. The distinction centrally informs Cambridge Platonism, Lockean epistemological linguistics, and Swiftian satire alike.

To put it plainly, the pressing needs of early modern politics reverse-engineered a long tradition of "reasonable" prophets who displayed none of the fears and tremblings polemically associated with radicals—and indeed imprinted upon sects called "Quakers," "Ranters," "Shakers," etc. We will look at a crucial articulation of this perspective, John Smith's *Of Prophesie*, in the next chapter. For now, it is worth noticing that the question of empirical accuracy fades to the background in this discourse. It is plainly obvious that scriptural prophets were far from universally serene and reflexive. Maimonides and Aquinas, in their more sophisticated (and, not coincidentally, more politically secure) articulations of the "rational prophet" trope, emphasize the extent to which strange voices, visions, and sounds accompany prophetic experiences in the Bible.[126] Spinoza, in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, goes so far as to deny that prophets are anything but overly imaginative moral polemicists—who perceive things that aren't really present with the same vividness that ordinary people perceive things that are. He denies the Maimonidean notion that prophets enjoy special intellectual congress with the divine and insists, in fact, that prophets and philosophers are very different sorts of people—the one prone to imaginative visions, the other to careful ratiocinations.[127] And he comes to this conclusion simply by reading the Bible and noticing the consistency with which prophetic experiences are there described in ecstatic, visionary terms. (And Voltaire, a century later, takes evident delight in

[126] See Altmann. On Maimonides' theory of prophecy, See also Alvin Reines, "Maimonides' Concept of Mosaic Prophecy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40: 325-62 and Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001).

[127] Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (ch. 2, sec. 19-20), edited by Jonathan Israel and translated by Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40-42. See also Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 73.

pointing out the frequency with which Biblical prophets do quite unsociable things like eat feces and marry prostitutes.)[128]

It is worth reiterating that this emphasis on irrationality and frenzy by no means accurately reflects the religious beliefs and practices of those eventually called enthusiasts. Certainly there are clear instances of ecstatic experience in the writings of theological figures like George Fox and John Bunyan. But there are also moments of intense reflection, discernment, patience, and quiet that resonate with Taylor's above recommendations. (Indeed, nowadays the Quakers are proverbially aligned with patience and the practice of consensus-oriented discernment of spirits, and with far better reasons than they were formally aligned with babbling and quaking.) Indeed, there is a large body of Quaker writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that attempt to countervail the polemics against them—that insist that this group be called not Quakers but their preferred name, "the Society of Friends," that emphasize the many commonalities linking their beliefs and practices with those of the mainstream, and that offer carefully considered reasons for those beliefs and practices that do not align.[129] Likewise, there are many instances of passion, depression, and sudden conversion among members of groups more readily identifiable as orthodox—even among Anglicans. One need only think of the passions, obsessions, fears, and sentimental pilgrimages of Samuel Johnson.[130]

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5. The enthusiast as rhetorical

But of course, we cannot expect any polemic to accurately represent its target. But the misalignment in this case is particularly marked. So-called enthusiasts, as we will continue to see,

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[128] Ezekiel 4.12; Hosea 1.2. Voltaire on Ezekiel's eating habits: ""Yet it must be admitted that cow-dung and all the diamonds of the great Mogul are perfectly equal, not only in the eyes of a Divine Being, but in those of a true philosopher." See *The Works of Voltaire* Volume IV, translated by William F. Fleming (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 306-07.

[129] See Keith.

[130] I am thinking especially of Johnson's pilgrimage to Lichfield, where he stands for hours in the rain in penance for mistreating his father. This episode could have been part of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*—or Fox's *Journal*. See James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, edited by George Birkbeck Hill, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 373.

were defined philosophically, theologically, and *medically* as frenzied, melancholic bodies—without reason, without patience, without discernment, without discipline. Consider, in this light, the frontispiece from Daniel Featley's *The Dippers Dipt, or, the Anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over their ears*. This work was first printed in 1645, in the midst of the English Reformation's climactic decade of open religious war, and was often reprinted in the two decades that followed. Featley was a Calvinist theologian—and thus would have been considered an Anabaptist (or close enough) by many Established Church Christians of his time. Indeed, those we might call "conservative Calvinists" were generally among the most active architects of the early concept of enthusiasm. Thomas Edwards, author of *Gangraena* (1646), the best-known work of seventeenth-century English heresiography, is another case in point. Eager to defend themselves from accusations of heresy, they turn this charge on others.

David Loewenstein and Anne Hughes have recently studied the work of such mid-century Calvinist heresiographers as Featley and Edwards as their works reflect a climate of deep religious paranoia and anxiety regarding the spread of "blasphemy" and "heresy."[131] What I would notice, beyond these accounts, is that such heresiographers in fact register, albeit unconsciously, the inadequacy of their own preferred concepts—in particular, the inadequacy of heresy—for dealing with the proliferation of self-authorized religious sects. When heresy is so abundant—and not any particular heresy, but countless varieties—how does one even oppose it? How does one define an orthodoxy against which to array so many doctrinal abominations? At the same time, these heresiographers find, or at least foreshadow, the means of accomplishing this redefinition of orthodoxy. They facilitate the recognition of the common denominator of seventeenth-century English heresy: self-authorized claims to divine inspiration. Edwards, for instance, uses the Gospel warning against "false Prophets which come to you in Sheeps clothing, but inwardly the yare ravening Wolves" as one of his epigraphs, and regularly returns to this

[131] Loewenstein, 194. Anne Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 2004).

image in his catalog of heresies.[132] These writers begin to bring the importance of such claims to the forefront of the discourse.

Another hint of this shift is evident in the frontispiece to *The Dippers Dipt*, in which Featley documents and particularizes the so-called heresies that proliferated following the publication and wide distribution of the vernacular English Bible—following, that is, the spread of hermeneutic power beyond the licensed church. On this frontispiece, one finds, for instance, the Menonist—ancestor of the Mennonite—audaciously assuming the power to write new scripture. (See figure 2.2 in appendix.) One finds the Hemerobaptist or "daily baptizer" usurping the initiation rite traditionally reserved for the church. One finds the Bucheldian (a follower of John of Leiden) sinfully cavorting with women—and prominently baptizing them, in the nude, in the center woodcut. And there's the Georgian (a follower of David Joris, whom we will meet again in our discussion of Henry More) with a little devil flying into his gaping, unlicensed mouth. And all of them are arranged under the pseudo-baptismal fiery breath of Satan—the great pretender, the chief spirit of lies and deception, the universal and persistent inspirer of the false prophetic imagination. Indeed, Satan's breath disconcertingly resembles droppings—particularly as it emerges from the bottom edge of the banner—which makes for a grotesque transubstantiation of his unholy spirit.

Numbered among these many varieties of heresy is the figure in the lower left-hand corner of Featley's illustration—the "enthusiast." He clenches his fist, clearly enraged and railing against some perceived evil. His body is wavering, askew. He might be drunk—if not literally, then with his own spiritual juices. His eyes seem sunken and glassy, as though clouded by

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[132] This is an epigraph for the *Second Part of Gangraena*. See Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena, or, A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years* (London, 1646), 45. *EEBO*. The image also appears on pp. 9, 11, and 48 of *Gangraena*, and on pp. 10, 37, 113, 164, and 166 of a sequel document included in the 1646 edition of *Gangraena*: *A Fresh and further DISCOVERY OF THE ERROURS and Pernicious Practises of the SECTARIES in ENGLAND*.

cataracts. His face is heavily lined and distorted by passion. He appears to be trapped within his own mind, shaking his fist at images painted on the insides of his eyeballs.

The enthusiast is here one figure among his unholy brethren. Within a decade of Featley's book, he has stepped forward and threatened the Anabaptist for the crown of preferred metonym for heresy in general. Beginning with Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* and Meric Casaubon's *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm* (both 1656), many treatises on enthusiasm were published in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. These were widely reprinted and debated well into the nineteenth century.[133] (See appendix figure 2.3 for an estimated frequency of word use through the English seventeenth century.) These works also elicited many replies from purported enthusiasts or false prophets—very often Quakers and Catholics—who disputed the term and argued for the legitimacy of their form of Christian inspiration. The disputatious works on both sides, for the most part, continue to pursue the methods of the earlier, heretical paradigm. They often attack the specter of enthusiasm—and defend favored sects from the charge of enthusiasm—using similar exegetical methods to those seen in intra-Christian debates from the Church Fathers forward, proposing better readings of the Bible, which are countered with different readings of the same Biblical evidence, and so on. But they also herald a profound shift in theological discourse—away from exegetical engagements on undesirably equal ground and toward the objectification, medicalization, and psychologization of such theological outliers. The discourse thus turns away from the question of whether those charged with enthusiasm are truly inspired or not. It brackets inspiration altogether and treats immanent claims to prophecy as signs of madness—or, in the preferred terminology of the seventeenth-century, melancholy. It tucks true prophecy out of reach—not because it isn't important to the discourse, but because it very much *is*—and treats the entire question of present inspiration under the sign, so expanded as to be now invisible, of false prophecy.

[133] See Taves, 17 ff.

Another way of putting this, the emphasis in the discourse ceases to be on the "errors" of the various sectaries plaguing England (a concern which is still centrally evident in a transitional work like *Gangraena*, which bridges the discourses of heresy and enthusiasm as I am distinguishing them here). What matters is not the monstrous beliefs such figures exhibit, so much as their erroneous ways of being spiritual. They preach erroneously. They influence others erroneously. They reason erroneously. The doctrines produced by these erroneous methods are not the polemical focus of the discourse of enthusiasm. The methods themselves are the focus. If heresy is about error, enthusiasm is about erroneousness.

Specifically, it is about the erroneous use of rhetoric. This shift is clear, for example, in Meric Casaubon's *A treatise concerning enthusiasme, as it is an effect of nature, but is mistaken by many for either Divine inspiration or diabolical possession,* which sold out three editions between 1654 and 56 and remains his best-known work.[134] Casaubon found the connection between enthusiasm and rhetoric somewhat naturally. He was an Aristotelian scholar, the son of the renowned humanist Isaac Casaubon (to whom Meric remained devoted throughout his own scholarly career), who was born in Geneva and then moved to London in 1611 when he was twelve years old. While in England, he converted to the Church of England; he remained staunchly loyal to this church through the Interregnum and until his death.[135] He inherited an interest in ancient languages—and, significantly, with the holiness of such languages—from his father, who, as Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg have shown, was particularly interested in Hebrew.[136] Meric Casaubon's publications in a similar vein included *De verborum usu* (1647), a treatise on the proper use of words, and *De quatuor linguis commentationis* (1650), which argues for the relation of English to Greek.

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[134] R. W. Serjeantson, 'Casaubon, (Florence Estienne) Meric (1599–1671)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4852, accessed 11 June 2014]
[135] Serjeantson, *DNB*. For Meric Casaubon's Aristotelianism, see Michael R. G. Spiller, *"Concerning Natural Experimental Philosophie": Meric Casaubon and the Royal Society* (The Hague, Boston, and London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), 18 ff.
[136] Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *"I have always loved the Holy Tongue": Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

The *Treatise concerning enthusiasme* makes clear that this grounding in philology and the history of languages gave Casaubon a unique and influential perspective on the question of lay inspiration. He argues in this treatise that enthusiasm is "a very *ardor*, and nothing else, whereof all men are naturally capable."[137] He considers it a form of rhetorical performance. His analysis of enthusiasm emphasizes the degree to which the appearance of inspired speech can be counterfeited, either by carefully rehearsing one's "*extempore*" delivery (or not so carefully, given the decline of rhetorical standards in contemporary England, according to Casaubon), or by self-induced trance.[138] The enthusiast, in other words, is not possessed by the devil. He is possessed by his own desire to be possessed. He is not a conduit of Satanic errors. He is an abuser of the universal human capacity for rhetorical self-presentation.

In making this point, Casaubon is concerned to let his reader know that he is not de-spiritualizing the world—only the enthusiast. The devil is still present in the enthusiast, insofar as the enthusiast shares the devil's evil nature. But the devil does not immediately create the enthusiast's inspirations. Thus Casaubon makes a distinction between "personal immediate possession" and "general concurrence" with a larger category.[139] He helps, in other words, to delimit enthusiastic subjectivity—to buffer the enthusiast, in Charles Taylor's terms.[140] Indeed, it is important to notice, as will be emphasized in the following chapter, how the categories of secularity including the buffered self identified by Taylor are first constructed polemically and projected onto religious dissidents by counter-enthusiasts like Casaubon. The enthusiast becomes, for Casaubon, a merely rhetorical totality—a subjectivity claiming to be a special point of contact between transcendence and immanence, who is in fact absolutely natural, absolutely ordinary. He

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[137] Meric Casubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasme* (London, 1655), 17. *EEBO*.
[138] For extempore speaking, see 158 ff. For self-induced trances: "And if that were granted, there would be no great question of the possibility of voluntary Trances: it being a thing (in ordinary judgement) of equall facility in point of nature, to fill the Ventricles of the Brain with pituitous (or whatever Physicians will make them,) humours, and to empty them at pleasure; and to command certain humours into the chine of the back, and nerves, to be recalled again at will" (91).
[139] Casaubon, 61.
[140] Charles Taylor, 25.

is thus for Casaubon a limited totality—able to be slotted into a larger spiritual purview without being himself spiritualized except by distant analogy with moral categories of good and evil.[141]

Casaubon's *Treatise* considers enthusiasm as something anyone can *do*, as it were. One only needs to practice the rhetorical foundations of appearing inspired. But at the same time, he argues that certain sorts of people are particularly susceptible to being fooled by such enthusiasts. Even as the enthusiasts themselves are generally voluntary charlatans, their victims are frequently people who are constitutionally susceptible to enthusiastic raptures and fits, and thus (to again use Taylor's terms) porous, open to influence from without, prone to fascination and insinuation. Predictably, this susceptibility breaks down according to class status. At several points in the *Treatise* Casaubon registers particular awe and concern at the vulnerability of the uneducated to fits brought on by exposure to enthusiastic rhetoric. Citing Aristotle's short work on divination by dreams, Casaubon expresses his agreement that there are natural, invisible "emanations" of future in the atmosphere which melancholic tempers can pick up on and read.[142] The ability to read these emanations seems stronger "when and where there was a disposition in the subject for reception or impression: which was, when and where reason had least force, as in Sleep, and Trances; and in such persons where reason naturally was weakest, and the phasie strongest, as in Women, weak men, Idiots, and the like."[143]

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[141] Later in his career, beginning with his well-known edition of John Dee's *Conversations with Spirits* (1659), Casaubon exhibits a central interest in proving the existence of spiritual beings and the reality of witches. One might take this to be an attempt to compensate for his work on enthusiasm, which helped popularize the notion that those who claim to be inspired often are not. Henry More takes a similar turn late in his career when he contributes to Joseph Glanvill's account of the reality of witchcraft, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681). Early counter-enthusiasts, it seems, were haunted by the disenchanting ramifications of their groundbreaking attempts to defend the Established Church from spiritual insurgents.

[142] See Aristotle, *On Divination in Sleep*. This very interesting work of Aristotle is worth more attention. While it is mostly incredulous about the possibility of divination by dreams, at a couple of points Aristotle suggests that he agrees with a physicalist interpretation of time and space that would figure foreshadowings of the future as skins, waves, images, or emanations of actuality travelling in some sense through space and able to be picked up by the dreamer. These waves are not Lucretian "skins" peeling off from the surfaces of things; rather they are like ripples of water caused by oarstrokes, which bear a vague impression of the object that set them in motion, not as representations but as repurcussions from which one might read backward a causal event just as one might guess, from looking at different ripples, that this pattern comes from an oar, that from a boat's motor, that from a duck scrambling into flight. Does this mean that Aristotle imagines time to be a physical substance? Aristotle doesn't say, and is, at any rate, careful to mark this discussion as purely speculative.

[143] Casaubon, 43.

Casaubon thus displays special concern for the degree to which such weak vessels are overly open to rhetorical persuasion. Simple people don't realize, Casaubon reasons, that certain rhetorical effects—such as the appearance that one is speaking ex tempore when one has in fact practiced one's speech carefully and repeatedly—might be faked. So might the appearance of ardor or passion. As he writes: "The ignorance of this advantage of nature, being unhappily mistaken for Christian *Zeal*, hath been the occasion of much mischief in the world, and a great stumbling block to simple people, to draw them into the contagion of pernicious Heresies."[144] Casaubon thus identifies as one of the central tasks of anti-enthusiasm the importance of naturalizing the ecstatic effects of extemporaneous preaching, and of rhetoric more broadly. And the image of the rhetorical enthusiast that he produces in his *Treatise*—dangerously charismatic, liable to infect all who listen—has, as we'll see, a long afterlife as the concept develops.

Hence even as the enthusiast himself is treated as buffered, his audience is treated as porous. Even as the enthusiast offers a way of thinking about the category of subjectivity—of the secret will of the enthusiast to deceive, to self-induce frenzy—his audience provides an occasion for thinking about intersubjectivity—the openness of the imagination to external effects and influences. He becomes, clearly, and perhaps for the first time—though, as we'll see, Henry More soon follows suit—a means of differentiating the categories of experience that characterize the process of rationalization.

Thus, as Casaubon helps to show, there was a rhetorical arms race to the bottom of language in the early modern centuries—to the point at which word and thing are conjoined in the creative action of the divine. By the mid-seventeenth century, as Casaubon exemplifies, the discourse of enthusiasm found a new path in this race. It ceased concentrating on the theoretical perspicuity of the Word and the satanic nature of doctrinal error. Instead, it turned to the polemical figuration of the muddied minds of those who appeared unable to receive the Bible's

[144] Casaubon, 213.

clear messages. The discourse turned, in other words, from reading the text, to figuring bad readers of the text.

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8. The enthusiast as wonder

Casaubon's *Treatise* marks a shift in the management of claims to prophetic authority. It simultaneously naturalizes the false prophet, insisting that he is just like anyone else, and marks the false prophet as unusual, insisting that he is a defective or extraordinary version of other people. The claims to authority supporting those called enthusiasts are not what matters in this discourse. Communication or persuasion—traditional means of reaching lost believers—are hopeless and ought to be abandoned. The enthusiast, in other words, is figured as beyond the reach of rational language—indeed, beyond the reach of his *own* language.

Thus the false prophet is reframed as what we might call a natural wonder—a being subject to the laws of nature, but revealing, through its unusual properties, hidden and unexpected dimensions of those laws. The enthusiast is "just like us"—only terribly different. And this turn captures the reversibility of this figure. Fears and anxieties—political, religious, philosophical—are projected onto the figure of the enthusiast, where they can be studied, categorized, and (to use a vocabulary familiar from New Historicism) contained. In this way, the enthusiast is (as I've suggested) a heuristic for working out the shape of the epistemologically limited self as it interacts with intersecting totalities of creation—nature, incarnation, and language.

The discourse of enthusiasm thus both rebukes and participates in the fear and wonder it perceives as both an irrational feature of the enthusiast's own mind and a rational response to the enthusiast's unfortunate existence. Generally, only one side of this process has been emphasized. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, in *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, write: "What was new among the late-seventeenth-century critics of enthusiasm and [natural] prodigies was their vivid

sense, based on personal experience of religious conflict and civil war, of the urgent political dangers lurking in the emotions of wonder and fear when paired."[145] But the wonder and fear in the discourse was not simply the enthusiast's. It was equally and concurrently the counter-enthusiast's. In other words, enthusiasm is not just a political problem stemming from the experience of wonder and fear (of prodigies, comets, and other traditionally prophetic signs). The enthusiast becomes figured as itself a Wunderkammer of strange and curious thoughts. The enthusiastic brain becomes a natural philosophical—and theological, and ontological, and political—hothouse.

John Evelyn, the diarist and founding member of the Royal Society who spent the 1640s traveling on the European continent, avoiding the war in England, writes of "a Burgundian-Jew who had married an Apostate Kentish-Woman" in precisely this mode, thus complementing his admiration of the arts, sciences, technologies, and prodigies of strange nations with an admiration of the outgrowths of (in his view) strange minds: "I asked him divers questions, and, amongst the rest, remember he told me that the World should never end: That our Soules transmigrated; & even those of the most holy persons did Pennance in the bodys of bruits after death; & so he interpreted the banishment & salvage life of Nebuchadnezar," etc. He concludes, "[A]nd so I tooke my leave of the lying-Jew, whom I found to be a merry dronken fellow.[146] The enthusiast—in this case Jewish, and thus among the oldest-established heretics extant—is figured as a mind housing a swarm of opinions.

And this swarm-like dimension of the enthusiast is a transitive rhetorical property of the discourse which it defined. The interior of the enthusiast's head is figured as a swarm of heresies—of opinions. Zoom out, and the individual enthusiast is revealed as one amongst a swarm of other enthusiasts—one strange mind among a hive of like minds. The discourse of

[145] Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 336.
[146] John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. De Beer (London: Everyman's Library, 2006), 33.

enthusiasm as wonder is encouraged by lurid accounts of singular yet interchangeable sects—particularly Ranters and Quakers but also Adamites, Seekers, etc.—who are depicted in less sophisticated literary forms as simple moral monsters practicing free love, committing unspeakable blasphemies, and spreading other perceived atrocities.[147] One interesting way of tracking the perceived interchangeability of sects during the 40s and into the 50s is the recycling of woodcuts among printers of anti-nonconformist tracts.[148] (See figure 2.4 for woodcuts.) For example, a woodcut somewhat anticipating the frontispiece to *A Tale of a Tub* was reused at least five times: for *New Preachers, New*, where the tub preacher was identified as Praisegod Barebone; for *The Sermon and Prophecie of Mr. James Hunt*, where it represents the title preacher; for *Lucifers Lacky*; for *A Swarme of Sectaries*, where the same image represents Samuel Howe, a cobbler given to "*strange preaching (or prating)*"; and finally for John Taylor's *A Tale in a Tub*, which we have already looked at in the above introduction.[149] All of these recycled woodcuts appeared in the span of roughly six months—in June through December 1641. Another recycled woodcut has the Adamites of 1641 (*A Nest of serpents discovered*) reappear as the Ranters of 1650 (*The ranters religion*). A third, perhaps the coup de grace, has a woodcut originally depicting a monstrous birth, *Declaration of a strange and Wonderful Monster: Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire* (1646), return as a Ranter in *The ranters monster* (1652). In these woodcuts "enthusiasts" are both salaciously individuated and indistinguishable, including from monstrous births—like so many rebounding atoms of religious and moral mistake.

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[147] There are two interesting books on the Ranters: Morton, *The World of the Ranters*; J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth, and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986). The latter achieved some notoriety for claiming that the Ranters never existed as a sect—they were purely a conservative fabrication designed to incite terror, panic, and a circling of wagons against all nonconformists. E.P. Thompson scathingly reviewed this thesis, thus proving the infectiousness of concepts: "[Davis] rounds it off with sixty pages of reprints from the worthless and salacious 'yellowpress' anti-Ranter tracts. This is like tying a large lead weight to the neck of whatever weakling kitten of the imagination has survived immersion in the tedium of his text, and sinking it finally to the bottom of the pond." See *The London Review of Books* 9.13 (1987), 9.

[148] See the wonderful blog entry on this subject in *Mercurius Politicus: A blog about early modern books, history and culture.* http://mercuriuspoliticus.wordpress.com/2010/11/06/recycled-woodcuts-part-2/

[149] John Taylor, *A tale in a tub.*

Finally, let's return, now under the sign of enthusiast as mental wonder, to the polemical works of Thomas Edwards, author of three lengthy parts of *Gangraena, or, A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time* (1646), which offers the verbal equivalent of recycled Ranter-Quaker-Seeker-Monster woodcuts. Edwards both particularizes the sectaries, dividing them into sixteen "heads or sorts" of which "Enthusiasts" are the ninth, then cleaves them apart and reassembles them piecemeal. He presents himself as a connoisseur of heresies. After noting that "Independents" of Cromwell's army are the best of this bad lot, he claims that only few "pure" Independents can be found living:

> I do not think there are 50 pure Independents, but higher flown, more Seraphicall (as a Chaplain, who knows well the state of that Army, expressed it) made up and compounded of Anabaptisme, Antinomianisme, Enthusiasme, Arminianisme, Familisme, all these errours and more too sometimes meeting in the same persons, strange monsters, having their heads of Enthusiasme, their bodies of Antinomianisme, their thighs of Familisme, their leggs and feet of Anabaptisme, their hands of Arminianisme, and Libertinisme as the great vein going thorow the whole; in one word, the great Religion of that sort of men in the Army, is liberty of conscience, and liberty of preaching.[150]

Much of *Gangraena* consists of horrified reports from various parsons reporting on the monstrous gatherings of these monsters:

> A godly Minister who came out of *Essex*, related to me not long since that *Oates*was now preaching in that Country […] and that many loose persons of the Country follow him, he preaching besides his Anabaptisticall opinions, the Arminian points; and this Minister spake it upon his knowledge that notorious Whoremongers and Drunkards follow him,

[150] Edwards, *Gangraena*, 14.

such as have been convicted by witnesses, and taken notice of by the Country, and are such still, yet go after him where he preaches from place to place.[151]

The story is much the same in many similar pamphlets and screeds. A couple of points are worth underscoring. First, although this is sheer and crude polemic, it also witnesses a struggle to in some way control the perceived chaos unfolding around England by inhabiting it rhetorically—whether in mockery, as John Taylor inhabits Mi-heele Mendsoale, or through a sort of field reporting, as Thomas Edwards does, or in some other manner. It may be hard to imagine that a direct line can be drawn from Mi-heele Mendsoale's *A Tale in a Tub* to Swift's early masterpiece. But this is obviously the case. Swift's work might be a mockery of a mockery (of a mockery), but it finds an ancestor here. The process by which Swift perfects the art of literary inhabitation of another's voice, another's pen—and eventually, of *any other's* voice, *any other's* head—starts in cheap impressions of conventicle exegetes. This is the beginning of learning to turn mock enthusiasm into a performance of linguistic pellucidity. Second, these examples of anti-sectarian screed will impress no one with their sophistication; still, they are evidence of an acknowledged need to understand how this state of religion came to be, if only to know how it might be overturned.

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9. The double role of the pagan enthusiast

The negative side of enthusiasm, associated with heresy, blasphemy, and false prophecy, is dominant throughout the early modern centuries—and indeed, well into the nineteenth. However, there is a more ambiguous side to the concept of enthusiasm as well, linked especially to poetic inspiration, but also to emotions of transporting ecstasy and what Nietzsche might call

[151] Ibid.

Dionysian fusion with others.[152] Before moving on from the general historical context of enthusiasm, it is important to say more about this.

Enthusiasm first enters the English language dressed in Greek, as in one of E.K.'s notes to Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, which describes poetry as "a certaine *ἐνθουσιασμός* and celestiall inspiration"—and roughly retaining its etymological meaning of "divine possession."[153] Throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the most involved meditations on enthusiasm appear in similar discussions of poetic inspiration. These early positive uses of the word are generally rapturous, wonder-struck—although they often retain a note of titillating danger familiar from *Phaedrus* (the usual locus classicus of this celebrated strain of enthusiasm), the delight-cum-risk of being pulled by some action on the soul, whether rhetorical, poetical, intoxicating, or erotic, into outright madness. Such enthusiasm is associated with tragic classical affects like fury, rage, rapture—which, if certainly dangerous, are also ennobled and heroic, particularly when bracketed, ironized, or otherwise knowingly performed. The ancient license for this special treatment of performed enthusiasm comes from Aristotle. As the translators of the 1686 edition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* put it:

> For we are apt to forgive one that is enrag'd, when he talks of some Heaven- reaching, or *Pelorian* mischeif; and then especially when he hath already mov'd the Auditors, and put 'em into a fury, either by praising or dispraising, by hatred or by love. Which *Isocrates* does in his *Panegyric* toward the end, making use of Fame, and memorials of what they suffer'd. For things that are alike they generally bawle out, who are in a heat; which they who are alike dispos'd are willing to hear. Wherefore they are agreeable and Proper for

[152] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14-21. Cf. Gordon Tesky, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), which argues that Milton's creative process should be understood as oscillating between radical fusion with and radical distance from God.

[153] See the Argument to "October" in *The Shepheardes Calender*. Edmund Spenser, *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, edited by William Oram et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 170.

> Poetry. For Poetry is a kind of Enthusiasm. Therefore this must be the way, or else with an Irony, as *Gorgias* did, or as we find done in *Phaedrus*.[154]

High, enraged language can be successfully used either under the press of an emotion or ironically—either sincerely, or sincerely insincerely. Such staged enthusiasm is never, in short, the problem, so long as it is indulged generically stable forms by those who know the classical rules of the game—i.e., those whom Prophet Hunt would accuse of a Cambridge schoolishness contrasting with his Christian foolishness.

While usually this poetic strain of enthusiasm is found in classical genres, particularly the pastoral, occasional early uses clear a site of mysterious access to specifically Christian profundities, as in Thomas Dekker's poetic rhapsody, *Dekker his dreame In which, beeing rapt with a poeticall enthusiasme, the great volumes of heauen and hell to him were opened, in which he read many wonderfull things* (1620), a work indebted to the tradition of English dream poems stretching back to Chaucer. Also interesting is the short sonnet sequence "Fancies Farewell," written in Latin by the Scottish poet Robert Boyd and translated by Sir William Mure. Here one finds Neoplatonic Christianity articulated in terms of enthusiasm:

> With sacred straines, reaching a higher key,
> My Thoughts above thy [Fancies] fictions farre aspire:
> Mounted on wings of immortalities,
> I feel my brest warmed with a wountlesse fire.
> My Muse a strange Enthusiasme inspires,
> And peece and peece thy flame, in smoake expires.[155]

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[154] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Rhetoric, or, The true grounds and principles of oratory shewing the right art of pleading and speaking in full assemblies and courts of judicature made English by the translators of The art of thinking* (London, 1683), 182-83. *EEBO*. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 3, Chapter 7, 1408b.20.

[155] Robert Boyd, *A spirituall hymne or The sacrifice of a sinner to be offred vpon the altar of a humbled heart, to Christ our Redeemer. Inverted in English sapphicks, from the Latine, of the reverend, religious, and learned divine, Mr Robert Boyd of Trocborege. By Sr William Mure yo: of Rowallane knight. By whom is also annexed a poeme, entituled Doomes-day. Containing, hells horrour, and heavens happinesse.* (Edinburgh: Printed by Iohn Wreittoun, 1628), ll. 9-14. *EEBO*.

The imagery is ultimately quite conventional, but interesting for imagining an enthusiasm that dissolves fancy—that lifts one out of the body, reaching for a state of abstraction in which the imagination, comparatively enfleshed, might burn and expire in smoke. Boyd's attention to breath patterns—the Muse inspires into him an enthusiasm which leads him to breathe out (expire) his fancy as though in a stream of smoke—further draw together and abstract against one another body and soul. One clearly detects here a non-polemical application of the inhale-exhale pattern of enthusiasm, where the self is alternatively conceived under the aegis of body and spirit, materia and abstraction, which we've seen turned against and projected onto those who seized prophetic authority without permission.

As I see it, the concept of enthusiasm, even when it becomes central to the discourse of politics and religion, never fully loses such poetic license. Poetry is, one might say, the enthusiastic exception throughout the critique—the one allowable miracle. Poets are allowed to be enthusiastic, because they aren't really enthusiasts in the political sense. Such poetic enthusiasts retain a distinction between fantasy and reality; indeed, they clarify this distinction. As More puts it, in a sentence that does much to encapsulate the discourse of enthusiasm, "[A] *Poet* is an *Enthusiast in jest*, and an *Enthusiast* is a *Poet in good earnest*; Melancholy prevailing so much with him, that he takes his no better then *Poeticall* fits and figments for divine Inspiration and reall Truth."[156] This statement that cuts to the quick of the perceived threat of enthusiasm—the threat of a total aestheticization of political imagination, a treatment of immanence as poetry and the world as an artwork that can be shaped at will.[157] More—himself a writer of a collection of "enthusiastic" verses, *Philosophical Poems* (1647)—shows a marked interest in distinguishing both in poetry and in "good" Platonism between those who keep their speculations invisible and

[156] Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656), 20. *EEBO*. I cite this edition, the first, throughout. It was reprinted in 1662 as part of *A collection of several philosophical writings of Dr Henry More*. Hereafter cited as *ET*.
[157] Cf. the philosophy of Alain Badiou, which advocates a revolutionary utopian fidelity to the vision of a society that might yet come to be, which is glimpsed in a moment of searing clarity. See Meditation 9 in Badiou, *Being and Event*, translated by Oliver Feltham (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 104-10.

imaginary, as it were, and those who bring them into the material world, into the realm of action, whether through alchemical experiments or crowd-gathering exhortations. More generally, poets are widely considered to be "good enthusiasts" even into the 1660s.[158] Eventually they are enshrined as such in by Dryden and Shaftesbury—precisely because they are enthusiasts "in jest," that is, both without actually surrendering to rapture, and in a satirical mode mocking those who have thus surrendered, or at least who say that they have.

But pagan enthusiasm is not only a conceptual region of poetic exception and license. The classical side of enthusiasm plays an important polemical function as well. Those who surrender to enthusiasm are not poets—they're possessed. Their possession is frequently figured in terms of sibylline—that is, automatically false prophetic—madness. In 1615, for instance, Thoman Anyan, the president of Corpus Christi College at Oxford, admonishes his undergraduates against "*Monomachies*" (duels), saying that they "are now become but *recreations*, and the least but *suspicion* of *disgrace* is a iust cause of a *single combate*. But this is *madnesse* not *manlinesse*; this kinde of courage is in the head, not in the heart, it is not hardy valour, but a soft and moist *enthusiasme* of *Bacchus*."[159] The various metaphoric fields evoked in Anyan's words, buttressed by Latin quotations—pagan, orgiastic, emasculating, pseudo-prophetic—are soon refined for more religious polemical purposes.[160]

We will see many examples of this use of enthusiasm in the chapters to come—beginning with John Smith and Henry More. In addition to drawing upon patristic sources opposing early heresies, the early modern discourse of enthusiasm inherited much from the polemics developed in persecuting witches, who were seen as latter-day incarnations of the demon-possessed sibyls

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[158] See, for example, Nathaniel Ingelo, *Bentivolio and Urania in four bookes* (London: Printed by J.G. for Richard Marriot, 1660). I hope to look more closely at this work--and to develop the importance of poetic enthusiasm for the late-century romance genre--in a future version of this project.

[159] Thomas Anyan, *A sermon preached at Saint Marie Spittle* (Oxford : Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1615), 31. *EEBO*.

[160] It might be worth recalling that Meric Casaubon took a B.A. from Christ Church in 1618. If he wasn't present for this particular tongue-lashing, he might well have been for others much like it. The various resonances it contains certainly carry into his *Treatise* and his other counter-enthusiastic works.

worshipped by pagans.[161] Enthusiasts too were seen as types of sibyls—as opposed to true prophets. Alternatively—or really concurrently—those who claimed to be prophetically inspired outside of the official channels were variously seen as reincarnated pagans, Gnostics, "Mohammedans," or Anabaptist super-villains from the rogues-gallery of European religious war.[162] (The title of William Russel's 1674 pamphlet puts it bluntly: *Quakerism is paganism*.)[163] Enthusiasts, in the purely polemical version of this view, were understood as theological zombies returned from the past, dragging with them undead ideas about God's role in the world.

Thus the discourse of enthusiasm has a complicated but clear double relationship to ancient understandings of inspiration. It withholds from critique the poetic performance of enthusiasm modeled on ancient literary genres and philosophies—and, beyond literal poetry, an ironized indulgence in enthusiastic moods and thoughts, marked by style and comportment as not entirely sincere. This is the enthusiasm claimed by John Dryden in the 1677 preface to *State of Innocence*, his operatic adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "Imaging is, in it self, the very heighth and life of Poetry. 'Tis, as *Loginus* describes it, a Discourse, which, by a kind of Enthusiasm, or extraordinary emotion of the Soul, makes it seem to us, that we behold those things which the Poet paints, so as to be pleas'd with them, and to admire them."[164] It is the understanding enthusiasm advocated by the critic John Dennis in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) and *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704).[165] It is further famously recuperated by Shaftesbury, who advocates a classical Platonic enthusiasm—albeit a socially regulated variety.

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161 See Heyd, 61-64.

162 For instance, Thomas Tenisen, *Of idolatry a discourse, in which is endeavoured a declaration of, its distinction from superstition, its notion, cause, commencement, and progress, its practice charged on Gentiles, Jews, Mahometans, Gnosticks, Manichees Arians, Socinians, Romanists: as also, of the means which God hath vouchsafed towards the cure of it by the Shechinah of His Son* (1678), passim.; Ibid., *An argument for union taken from the true interest of those dissenters in England who profess and call themselves Protestants* (1683), 8-9. *EEBO*.

163 *EEBO*.

164 Dryden, *The state of innocence and fall of man an opera, written in heroique verse and dedicated to her Royal Highness, the Dutchess* (London, 1677), x. *EEBO*.

165 John Dennis, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701), *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704). Accessed using *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (*ECCO*). See Klein, 165. See also Heyd, [xxx].

This strain of the discourse is sometimes seen as revolutionary and original.[166] In fact, it is recuperative. It returns to an emphasis on poetic inspiration present in the earliest uses of the term "enthusiasm," and continually available through the seventeenth-century to those like Henry Vaughan, Henry More, and Nathaniel Ingelo who know how to evoke enthusiastic raptures and experiences of divine possession—and how to keep these experiences safely tucked away from the political.

I would further suggest, looking forward, that it is in this mode, however subtly, that the three positive recuperations of enthusiasm I will identify in More, Locke, and Swift should be understood to participate. For More and Locke, positive enthusiasm involves recovering the ancient meaning at the center of revealed texts. More sees this recovery in terms of typological allegory: all meaning refers to the Incarnation of God's Word in the person of Jesus. Locke sees this recovery in terms of careful hermeneutics that respects both the complexity of words as such and the added complexity of recovering the distant historical context informing the meaning of ancient writing--in his case, the Epistles of Paul. Both thus disavow the pagan context of the positive enthusiasm associated with classical pagan philosophy and poetry. But at the same time they participate in a discourse of ancientness requiring the knowing reader to suspend his current perception of the world and enter into a distant and strange experience of meaning centered in the distant past. This emphasis bridges these Christian modes of "ancientness," as it were, and the more familiar pagan modes (which I will discuss below). Swift, meanwhile, participates more openly in the pagan form of positive enthusiasm both in his erudite recoveries of ancient literary forms like the Menippean satire and in his subtle evocation (as we will see in the reading of "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" that closes Chapter Five) of classical poetic and theatrical elements such as the chorus precisely where his writing presses toward transfiguration. In sum, a

[166] Cf. Lawrence Klein: "Offering a positive view of enthusiasm in Characteristics, Shaftesbury rebelled against the major tendency of fifty years of Anglican polemic" (166).

positive sense of enthusiasm persists through the seventeenth century, as we will see, and subsequent valorizations of the term should be understood as drawing on this source of the discourse in particular.

At the same time, the classical concept of enthusiasm has a polemical side. It is used to cast enthusiasts in terms of paganism, drawing on tropes of sibylline madness, feminized false prophecy, pagan abandon, etc. We will see many examples of this polemical strain of the classical discourse in the chapters to come—particularly in the discussions of More and Swift. And this observation regarding the double orientation of the discourse of enthusiasm toward pagan sources draws out an important but not often noticed dimension of the more general use of ancients in seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century polemics. As Larry F. Norman has recently suggested, it is far too simple to conflate (as many have done) "progressive" views with the Moderns and "conservative" views with the Ancients in the vesions of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns that wracked France, England, Europe more generally in the seventeenth-century and beyond.[167] Norman shows that persons who identified as an "Ancient" in the so-called war of ancients and moderns did not always simply believe that, say, Homer and Virgil were unsurpassed poets, and Aristotle and Plato inexhaustible philosophers to whom we are always catching up. Rather, they believed the ancients to have been very much different from the living—and found it important to cultivate the ability to appreciate just how different they were, just how strange, how distant.[168] In this view, those called enthusiasts were to some extent ancients in earnest. They believed that they were interacting with spirits, restoring the primitive church, and so on. This was, from the Ancient perspective, farcical. But it was dangerous

[167] Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 31, 74.
[168] Norman, 62. See also Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's insightful discussion of the *Querrelle des Anciens et des Modernes* in *Making Sense in Life and Literature*, translated by Glen Burns (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 79-110.

precisely because it didn't know that it was farcical—didn't appreciate the impossibility of *being* or *really imitating* the ancients, rather than understanding them with sensitivity, imitating them formally, and so on. Ancients knew they were living in the modern world. Ancients depicted Moderns as believing they were living in the ancient world. Ancients respected the distinction between person and personae, between the experiencing being *one is* and the prosthetic experiential forms *one puts on*. Moderns collapsed this distinction, seizing on Francis Bacon's observation that those living *now* are the true ancients living in "a more advanced age of the world, and stocked with infinite experiments and observations," who should thus be bold not to read but to *be* new Aristotles, Galens, and Homers.[169] Thus Moderns frequently mock Ancients using those tropes of enthusiasm which emphasize a failure to differentiate between one's own subjective experience, and the sorts of subjective experience characteristic of past epochs—and, increasingly, as in *Hudibras*, the comic-generic materials of *Don Quixote*. We will have further occasion to develop this point, as might be expected, in the chapter on Jonathan Swift.

For now, the two sides of ancientness in the discourse of enthusiasm offers a segue to the last subject of this chapter—the importance of the figuration of totalities in this discourse. Good enthusiasm—classical-poetic-tragic enthusiasm—is performative. This means, quite simply, that it imitates enthusiasm without being absorbed into the ontological, theological, or sociological—or otherwise logical—perspective being marked as enthusiastic. Poets, as More says, are "enthusiasts in jest." Aesthetic awareness acts like a sort of buffer in the discourse of enthusiasm protecting one from being absorbed into a genuinely paganistic or heretical viewpoint mistakenly self-conceived as a new, fresh revelation.[170]

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[169] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon Volume 4: Translations of the Philosophical Works 1*, edited by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 82.

[170] This is one way of arriving at a point endorsed quite bluntly by Geoffrey Hartman, who sees literary criticism itself as a tradition of "civility" rooted in opposition to enthusiasm. Hartman, *Minor Prophecies: The Literary Essay in the Culture Wars* (Harvard University Press, 1991), 177. Cited in Mee, 25.

11. The enthusiast as prosthetic totality

As I have shown, the discourse of enthusiasm is split between those admiring—wondering at—those who claim prophetic authority, and mirroring them—both satirically and, in modified ways, formally. Counter-enthusiasts recognize the seriousness of the challenge to political order represented by those who claim to oppose things as they are on the basis of scripture. The enthusiast is the multifaceted means of thinking through this challenge.

I suggested at the outset that my general thesis in this chapter in tracing the emergence of the discourse of enthusiasm from the discourse of heresy concerns the role of the enthusiast in the cultural framing of what I have called limited totalities. The enthusiast becomes a proxy for some (subjectively considered) total truth which is (intersubjectively considered) no bigger than his own brain. This process of critique and polemic helps to differentiate the categories of experience associated with the process of rationalization—self, society, and nature. Previous studies have emphasized particular sides of this process. Jon Mee emphasizes the very important intersection of individuality and society.[171] Others emphasize the equally important intersection of material nature and subjective experience. J.G.A. Pocock, for instance, in the course of suggesting that enthusiasm is the "antiself" of "enlightenment," considers enthusiasm as denoting "any intellectual system of the universe in which the mind [is] of the same substance as the universe it [apprehends]."[172] There are clear reasons for this emphasis, and the importance for the discourse of enthusiasm of a materialist monism which would collapse the distinction between mind and matter will be especially stressed in the next chapter. But in my view these approaches miss the *provisionality* of the enthusiast's purported perspective. In short, rather than consider enthusiasm as mapping meaningfully onto beliefs, it must be seen as avoiding the question of what those called enthusiasts believe. The discourse of heresy is concerned with erroneous belief. The discourse of enthusiasm is concerned with the erroneous use of reason. It emphasizes not

[171] Mee, 39-40.
[172] Pocock, 18.

doctrinal errors, but category errors. The discourse *is* motivated by the real threat of unlicensed prophetic authority. But it takes this threat as an occasion to imagine the coordinates concerned in belief and knowledge, to arrange those coordinates, to figure them.

In my view, then, enthusiasm is a discourse designed to allow the provisional inhabitation, contemplation, and organization of totalities, each understood as coherent-yet-partial, and held together by the process of totalizing itself. The impulse to totalize follows from the real subject of enthusiasm—prophecy, an ancient notion fusing natural, subjective, and political dimensions of experience. One might say that the enthusiast is a prosthetic prophet, used by those who wish to defend instituted order to imagine the threats to that order, and to participate in the process of radically reimagining the organization of the world without committing to revolution. He is a heuristic developed in the process of rationalization—and necessary for this process, given its centrality in the figuration of the basis of the legitimacy of the crisis-ridden cultural institutions of church and state.

The enthusiast continues to operate in this way throughout the eighteenth century—as a means of projecting and ordering totalities. If space permitted, it would be fruitful to include in this study Voltaire's uses of prophets—and particularly Quakers—in figuring his political philosophy.[173] Likewise, one could include Samuel Johnson's more sympathetic engagements with enthusiasm—among them the student, in *The Rambler*, who tries on so many philosophies that he loses all sense of himself; and the astronomer, in *Rasselas*, who secretly thinks that his thoughts

[173] For example, Quakers are the focus of the first four letters of Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques* (translated as *Letters Concerning the English Nation*) (1733, revised 1778). This was his first major work of philosophy and set the standard for a number of subsequent works, including the *Philosophical Dictionary*. Voltaire's recorded conversations with a Quaker in these letters modulate in tone between amusement at the "singular" opinions and sudden frenzies of his interlocutor, and poignant sympathy for a number of his ideological positions, including his opposition to war. Voltaire concludes: "England is properly the country of sectarists. […] An *Englishman*, as one to whom liberty is natural, may go to heaven his own way." See Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, edited by Nicholas Cronk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 26. The various editions of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* further display a concern with prophets and prophecies bordering on obsession. This is a dimension of his thinking which is certainly able to bear much greater critical emphasis.

control the weather.[174] One might do well to include David Hume in an expanded study as well, particularly his letters, where he voices the fear that he is losing his balance, as it were, and slipping into enthusiasm in earnest in the course of preparing to write his *Treatise of Human Nature*.[175] And, as mentioned already, one might connect the discourse of enthusiasm to the rise of the novel. The centrality for the novel of Quixotism might be illuminated by its place within the polemic of enthusiasm in the English seventeenth century—and in related polemics across Europe through the Wars of Religion.[176]

At present, this project focuses on the foundations of the discourse in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. It casts the counter-enthusiast as occupying a position of what one might call "intermodality"—a position through which the interconnections of nature, self, and society might be imagined, even as these spheres are delimited and differentiated. The figure of the enthusiast allows counter-enthusiasts, as orchestrators of enthusiasm, to provisionally entertain potential ontologies and epistemologies without committing to them. We turn next to Henry More and the other Cambridge Platonists, who exemplify the extent to which counter-enthusiasm projects and orders totalistic perspectives as part of the project both to discredit and to take over the revolutionary prophetic energy of the English Civil Wars.

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[174] See Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* 95, on Pertinax the skeptic, who eventually loses all sense of center. Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, ed. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, volumes 3-5 of *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Allen T. Hazen et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 4: 143-46. This was one of the two most reprinted *Rambler* essays during Johnson's own lifetime. See Roy McKeen Wiles, "The Contemporary Distribution of Johnson's *Rambler*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (1968), 167. For the astrologer, see Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia,* "Chapter XL: The History of a Man of Learning."

[175] "I have notic'd in the Writings of the French Mysticks, & in those of our Fanatics here, that, when they give a History of the Situation of their Souls, they mention a Coldness & Desertion of the Spirit, which frequently returns, & some of them, at the beginning, have been tormented with it many Years. As this kind of Devotion depends entirely on the Force of Passion, & consequently of the Animal Spirits, I have often thought that their Case & mine were pretty parralel, & that their rapturous Admirations might discompose the Fabric of the Nerves & Brain, as much as profound Reflections, & that warmth or Enthusiasm which is inseperable from them." David Hume, "Letter to [Dr. George Cheyne], March or April 1734," in *The Letters of David Hume Volume 1: 1727-1765*, edited by J.Y.T. Grieg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17

[176] For a quite different reading of *Don Quixote* which stresses its role in the "disenchantment of the world," see Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 2002), 273 ff.

II. THREE VERSIONS OF COUNTER-ENTHUSIASM

3. ALLEGORIES OF ENTHUSIASM: INCARNATION AND INSPIRATION IN HENRY MORE AND THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS

> Here we are all, by day; By night we're hurl'd
> By dreames, each one, into a sev'rall world.
> -Robert Herrick[177]

1. Into the Enthusiast

As the last chapter has shown, enthusiasm comes to life (as an English-language concept) within a complex discourse that frames and pathologizes the popular appropriation of scriptural authority. There is a flow or rhythm to the discourse of enthusiasm. It begins, frequently, at the headwaters of the post-Reformation crisis of theological-political authority—with lay interpretation of the Bible. But it quickly carries attention away from this source, rearranging the conceptual mise-en-scene so as to satirize and undermine the overweening lay reader of scripture.

It does this in a number of ways. At times, it contemptuously reproduces extra-hierarchical claims to illumination. For instance, consider the Cambridge Hebraist and (likely) latitudinarian John Spencer:

> Among the many giddy Fancies and Errors of the late Times, bred, like the Worms in the *Manna,* out of the Body of our corrupted Government and Discipline, this was that … lea[d]ing imposture, That the true *Seculum Spiritus Sancti* was now coming on upon the World, wherein the immediate Teachings of God should antiquate the more dead an obscure Teachings of the Gospel, as those did the more weak and cloudy Instructions of the Law; that the Minds of Holy Men should conceive (like the Virgin *Mary*) by the sole *overshadowings of the Holy Ghost,* without any Assistances from Man or Humane Literature. That Men should be autorized and assisted to the due performance of the Duties of publick Preaching and Praying by the incitements of God upon the place. […] That the

[177] Robert Herrick, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick, Vol. I*, edited by Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21. This is the 57th poem in *Hesperides*.

> mighty impressions and propensions upon the spirits of the *Faithful,* was an interpretative Voice from Heaven, a kind of *Bath-Col* to supply the defect of Scripture-Prophecy in Dispensations more dark and aenigmatical.[178] Whence it came to pass that every morbid heat of Passion and blind Zeal was christened by the name of an *Ignis sacer,* the sacred impress and discovery of the Holy Ghost, and every crazy Fancy and Dream dub'd a Prophetick Vision.[179]

Spencer's own ostentatiously casual learning—"*Seculum Spiritus Sancti*," "a kind of *Bath-Col*," "*Ignis sacer*"—reasserts the hermeneutical distance that those called enthusiasts have sought to close. He dresses them up as dunces in theologian's clothing—as so many proofs that a little learning *is* a dangerous thing.

At other times, the discourse refuses the Judeo-Christian frame altogether. Where a radical reader of the Bible might think of his prophetic reading as typologically harmonious with the tradition of Adam, Moses, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul—and, of course, Jesus—the discourse of enthusiasm shifts the cosmological background, situating this unlicensed reader in the company of sibyls, witches, and other pre-discredited pagans. The enthusiast's God is hollowed out into a god among gods—which is further hollowed out into an unconscious allegory of his own prideful, licentious desires. (We have seen—and will see in this chapter—a number of examples of this strain of discourse.)

Thus the discourse of enthusiasm does not initiate the exceedingly sensitive battle regarding the proper structure of authority. But it does seek to fight it on advantageous rhetorical terrain. Indeed, it develops an extensive repertoire of framing genres in order to handle the question of prophetic authority in a way that evacuates its force. On a conceptual level, ne might

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[178] *Bath-Col*, literally "the Daughter of the Voice," was a voice from heaven, alternately interpreted in Jewish traditions as a genuine or delusional interpretive aid in reading scripture. See the helpfully extensive note to John 12.20-44 in George Townsend, ed., *The New Testament, arranged in chronological and historical order* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1838), 283.

[179] John Spencer, *A discourse concerning vulgar prophecies wherein the vanity of receiving them as the certain indications of any future event is discovered, and some characters of distinction between true and pretending prophets are laid down* (London, 1665), 2-3. *EEBO*.

think of these genres in terms of allegorical-discursive tinctures. Intincted this way, the enthusiast's feverish, atomistically jumbled brain stands out as the real issue. Intincted that way, and the enthusiast is arranged in a long chain of enthusiasts stretching back to Simon Magus and forward to the Antichrist. Intincted yet another way, and the enthusiast is a modern-day pythia inhaling intoxicating vapors from the bowels of the earth. And the important point to take away is that the discourse of enthusiasm does not settle for any one rhetorical-generic intincture. It wants—and freely uses—them all. It shifts between allegorical cosmologies in order to settle the enthusiast—to limit prophetic totality—in the most convenient manner.

So far we've looked at examples of this process that are primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with the figure of the enthusiast as a surface. The enthusiast is recognizable, in (for example) the rational prophet tropology, as an irrational, disordered exterior—with clouded eyes and an unseemly grimace. From the perspective of the history of style, the enthusiast is recognizable by certain superficial features—a "high" rhetorical register, a bewitching impromptu delivery, a frantic piling-up of clauses, etc.—which have been traditionally contrasted with the cool, measured tones of neoclassical style.[180] Meanwhile, we have seen few writers exhibit much curiosity about what is going on *within* the enthusiast—under the surface. Indeed, so far the enthusiast has been defined *as* surface—as a sort of living woodcut.

In this chapter, we will look at a number of writers who emerge later in the discourse and *do* propose to explain the internal mechanisms of enthusiasm. These writers—known as the Cambridge Platonists—shift the discourse in some very important ways. Most influentially, their concentration on the medical physics beneath enthusiastic language allows for the development of an explanatory vocabulary for the problem of popular spirituality that appears to avoid the

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[180] Classic studies arguing this point, in addition to those mentioned in Chapter One above (Williamson, Croll, Wiley), include R.F. Jones, "Science in English Prose Style" and "Science and Language in England of the Mid-Seventeenth Century," *The Seventeenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951). See also W.S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

problem of doctrine altogether. One needn't listen to what a street preacher says. One can instead *diagnose* this enthusiast as a victim of melancholy. The Cambridge Platonists, and in particular Henry More, with whose works we will be particularly concerned here, are thus often seen as important thinkers in the development of medical psychology. Like Johann Weyer, whom Freud listed among history's most important thinkers for his retrospectively courageous insistence that witches are not actually possessed by Satan, but are in fact mentally ill, Henry More and his colleagues have been seen as progressive agents of the scientific disenchantment of spirituality who rightly see false prophets not as possessed by demons but as (in current terms) depressed, schizophrenic, or manic.[181]

Thus the Cambridge Platonists are central to the development of an especially significant provisional totality for the process of the rationalization of prophecy—the medical materialist totality, discussed in the third section of this chapter. But it is important to note at the outset that their contribution to the discourse of enthusiasm does not end here. Indeed, it is seriously misleading to limit (say) Henry More's approach to enthusiasm to the cultivation of the physiological gaze. I will show in this chapter that the medicalization of the prophet is just one dimension of a larger rationalization schema that includes other key dimensions. Some of these look more "modern" than others. Some of them look decidedly medieval. But to emphasize, as many scholars do, the ways in which the various dimensions of these systems do not cohere is to miss the degree to which these systems balancing natural philosophical, experiential, and political insights are themselves "modern." They balance totalities—not committing fully to a given philosophy, whether empiricist, skeptical, materialist, or rationalist, but developing each of these strains according to its own logic and tethering them to a simple core of rationality—in a way that anticipates the idealist systems of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Their example

[181] See, e.g., A. Rupert Hall, "Henry More and the Scientific Revolution," *Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies*, edited by Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1990), 37-54.

suggests the degree to which rationalization schema are initially motivated by and modeled on the crisis of prophetic authority.

In putting forth this larger argument, I stress two key points. First, I show that the development of a system of balanced totalities in Cambridge Platonist thinkers involves the provisional inhabitation of the figure of the enthusiast. In order to delimit enthusiasm as a symptom of material processes, counter-enthusiasts adapt the perspective they simultaneously polemicize. They play the enthusiast—but also indicate the provisionality of their playing. This is a crucial dimension of subsequent counter-enthusiastic rhetorics—from Swift's to Carlyle's to Stephen Colbert's.

Second, I will show that this strain of the discourse of enthusiasm, which appears to be concerned with the interiority of the enthusiastic subject, was finally interested in a yet more elusive interiority—that of signification itself. The discourse pivoted, particularly in the thought of Henry More, from the incarnation of the enthusiast, to the incarnation of the Word. The discourse of enthusiasm thus offered—and More is very explicit about this—a way into the core of Christian doctrine, the nature of the creative and redemptive "word made flesh." Thus the provisional inhabitation of the enthusiast—the polemical-philosophical *use*, as it were, of the enthusiastic avatar—enabled an unprecedented inquiry into the structure of signification as a proxy for human-divine relations. In *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), which many scholars consider his major theological-philosophical work, More frames this as an inquiry into competing allegories of the self—where the false prophetic mode of signification refers all events, historical and natural, back to the enthusiastic subjectivity, and the true prophetic mode figures the reasoning self as a vehicle for a larger divine allegory centered on the incarnation of God in Jesus.[182] For the false enthusiast, in More's view, signification is all about *oneself*—whomever one is. For the true enthusiast (and enthusiasm is a term More is somewhat unusually

[182] Robert Crocker, "Henry More: A Biographical Essay," *Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies*, edited by Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1990), 7.

comfortable imbuing with a positive as well as a negative meaning), signification is all about God. In the one, oneself is the tenor of language; the past is an allegorical figuration of the experiential present. In the other, oneself is a transparent vehicle carrying the divine logos through time; the present is a figurative echo of history's crux. Thus More carries forward the observations of Luther discussed in the previous chapter, and anticipates the still more direct turn of John Locke—a thinker very intimately connected to the Cambridge Platonists—to the issue of linguistic epistemology and signification as it bears on the problem of false prophecy.

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2. The Cambridge Platonists

So who were the Cambridge Platonists? They were a cohort of Cambridge scholars that emerged in the course and wake of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. Core members of the group include Benjamin Whichcote (the longtime pastor of St. Lawrence Jewry, where he preached erudite sermons attended by Henry More, John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, Locke, and many others), Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Nathaniel Colverwell, John Smith, and Peter Sterry. Their associates included More's close friend and colleague Anne Conway, Joseph Glanvill, John Wilkins, Walter Charleton, Isaac Newton, Damaris Masham, John Locke, the aforementioned John Spencer, and many other influential scholars and thinkers.[183] The core thinkers of the group share some common philosophical and political interests. They display an interest in Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy (although some members of the group were equally inclined to Aristotle). They confirm the Augustinian interpretation of evil as the privation of good, and emphasize the religious and moral importance of pursuing the unattainable goal of "deiformity," or human conformity to divinity.[184] And they hold a common sense of the

[183] For a good review of philosophical themes in the Cambridge Platonists in general, see Charles Taliaferro, *Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11-25.
[184] See, e.g., Aharon Lichtenstein, *The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 206.

importance of the problem of enthusiasm both for the political legitimacy of the state and for the future of the Christian church. All of them were counter-enthusiasts.

The Cambridge Platonists are frequently depicted as bridging the magicians and mystics of the late medieval and Renaissance period and the rationalists and empiricists of modern philosophy. They are, as Charles Taliaferro puts it, a Janus-faced hinge in the periodization of philosophy, looking at once forward and backward.[185] At a glance, this is undeniable. Some aspects of Cambridge Platonist thought are startlingly modern: their sophisticated post-Cartesian emphasis on philosophical rationalism, for instance, and their medico-psychological approach to the question of divine inspiration. Other aspects seem atavistic: for example, their impassioned late-century defenses of the reality of witches, demons, and other spirits.[186] Many scholars have been puzzled by the degree to which these thinkers—and Henry More in particular—could have entertained such apparently discordant notions.[187] Richard Popkin, displaying a more capacious view of seventeenth-century thought, has wondered how differently the history of ideas—and indeed history in general—might appear if the marriage of mysticism and science perfected in the Cambridge Platonists and adapted by (among others) their Cambridge colleague Isaac Newton had not been severed by positivists eager to stress the natural philosophical and suppress the alchemical-mystical side of their seventeenth-century synthesis.[188]

I take a different approach here. I see these thinkers as having balanced logics of inquiry in a way that did have a lasting influence on the longer course of rationalization—and not only because they were rediscovered and championed by later thinkers.[189] They articulate an attitude

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[185] Taliaferro, 11.
[186] See Richard Popkin, "The Spiritualist Cosmologies of Henry More and Anne Conway," *Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies*, edited by Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1990), 103; Allison Coudert, "Henry More and Witchcraft," *Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies*, edited by Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1990), 115-36.
[187] This is the central conceit of Daniel Fouke's study of Henry More, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More: Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
[188] Popkin, 97.
[189] Such as, for example, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who uses a quote from More for the epigraph to his essay, "The Over-Soul."

toward philosophy that emphasizes the degree to which apparently consistent perspectives might be provisionally entertained—tried on and put away as needed. This is not to say that they have no philosophical center. They are, after all, Platonists. And more importantly here, they are devout Christians dedicated to defending the established church (as they understand it) from the linked threats of atheism and enthusiasm.[190] But they exhibit flexibility *around* this core—a willingness to play with the perspectives they initially oppose—and this attitude itself has a very long afterlife. One might trace it through Hume—who turns from rigorously establishing the non-existence of the self to a relaxing game of backgammon with friends.[191] One might find it in the Millite notion of manysidedness.[192] One might hear it echoed in the notion, voiced by Stephen Jay Gould, that religion and science are "non-overlapping magisteria."[193] And one might detect it in Richard Rorty's ironist, balancing "final vocabularies."[194] In short, they help structure—around a theological core—a proto-liberal approach to ideology.

I will have more to say along these lines in my concluding section. For now, it is important to show this balancing act in action as it pertains to the discourse of enthusiasm. The following discussion will emphasize their provisional inhabitations of one family of totalities in particular: those associated with materialism. I emphasize the Cambridge Platonism interest in materialism for a number of interrelated reasons, which it is worth stating clearly at the outset of this chapter. First, it might appear to be initially unclear why thinkers who broadly endorse the idealist philosophies of Plato and Plotinus would be interested in materialism at all except to oppose and reject it. Indeed, this is ostensibly what these thinkers are doing—opposing what they perceive to be the rise and spread of atheistic materialism. As Cudworth writes, such "Epicurean"

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[190] This link is especially clear in Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* (see below) and in More's *Antidote against Atheism* (1653), which claims that enthusiasm encourages atheism in part by making religion look ridiculous.
[191] See Book 1, Part 4, Section 7 of David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 145.
[192] Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVIII: Essays on Politics and Society*, eds. J. M. Robson and Alexander Brady (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1977), 232.
[193] Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History* 106 (1997): 16-22.
[194] Rorty.

thinkers advocate a deterministic fatalism that leaves no room either for God or for human freedom. The links Cudworth perceives between this philosophical system and its political and theological ramifications are clear in the way he introduces the subject: "The *Democritick Fate,* is nothing but The *Material Necessity of all things without a God:* it supposing *Sensless Matter, Necessarily Moved,* to be the onely Original and Principle of all things: Which therefore is called by *Epicurus, The Physiological;* by us, the *Atheistick Fate*."[195] Democracy (in Cudworth's view, a very bad thing), atheism, and materialism are here all bound in one unholy knot. He constructs his "true intellectual system of the universe," then, to delineate and confute this knot. But at the same time, this project of delineating and confuting atheistic materialism required Cudworth 1) to take this perspective seriously and to reproduce its arguments in great detail, and, more significantly, 2) compeled him to adapt certain forms of materialist thinking *against* the Epicureans. Cudworth considered a certain sort of atomistic mechanism—which he calls "Mechanick theism" and associates with Descartes—to be useful (in doses) in opposing atheist materialism.[196] As Charles Taliaferro and Alison Teply put it, "Cudworth supported Descartes' attempt to revive atomistic philosophy and so distinguish mind from matter. Cudworth held that atomistic mechanism directly clashed with the ancient atheistic materialism that, in his opinion, Hobbes had taken from the Epicureans for his own natural philosophy."[197] In other words, he adapts dimensions of materialism to his greater theist idealist project. He is not the only Cambridge Platonist to do this. A similar balance is evident, as we will see, in Henry More and John Smith.[198]

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[195] Cudworth, Ralph, *The true intellectual system of the universe. wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted and its impossibility demonstrated* (London, 1678), v. *EEBO*.
[196] Cudworth, 687.
[197] Charles Taliaferro and Alison Teply, editors, *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 22.
[198] On More's adaptation of materialism for a broadly Platonist and Cabbalistic system, see also Robert Crocker: "The title of a long supplement to [*Psychodia Platonic, or Platonical Song of the Soul*], *Democritus Platonissans* (1646), is suggestive of the essential harmony he already perceived to exist between the experimental, mechanical philosophy, as it was expounded by Descartes, and the mystical, intellectual dualism of his own Neoplatonic adoptions. Descartes' physical system, which he first encountered in about 1645, appeared to compliment his Platonic 'Cabbala' because it was based upon a similarly dualistic assumption, that bodies were metaphysically 'dead' or in themselves 'non-existence,' and that the natural world was moved by 'res cogitans'—for More, spiritual being." Crocker, "Henry More: A Biographical Essay," 5.

I see this balancing of idealist and materialist strains as highly significant both for the history of rationalization and the emergence of the balanced totalities of enlightenment. These thinkers employ a guarded materialism intended not to replace, but to *defend* the spiritual core of their perspective. At the same time, this guarded engagement with materialism allows these thinkers a deep archive of polemical resources for characterizing their intellectual, political, and theological opponents, against whom they deploy materialist thinking in order to despiritualize their claims to political legitimacy and religious authority. In keeping with the shift from heresy to enthusiasm traced in the last chapter, these selective applications of materialism avoid the question of whether those they accuse of atheist materialism actually are atheist materialists. Some, like Hobbes, might well be. But others, like Familists and Quakers, appear very much to believe in the reality of spirit. Their own beliefs, however, do not matter. The Cambridge Platonists either dismiss the question of belief altogether, or accuse such thinkers of being "secret" materialists.[199] In short, their provisional occupation of materialist totality allows at once for the defense of one sort of spirituality, and for the despiritualization of another.

I see this structure of provisional materialism as important for the rationalization of experience and thus for the emergence of the categories of enlightenment. This is, to put it plainly, an important stage in the history of the concept of objectivity—understood as that dimension of reality which corresponds to natural, atomistic, mechanical laws as opposed to moral or aesthetic laws. It is important, in my view, that this dimension of experience was conceived of at the beginning of the enlightenment as a part with a share in a greater spiritual whole. Moreover, it is important that this part was formulated polemically, both in terms of what bad political subjects believe (they are atheist materialists, even if they don't admit it), and in

[199] Cudworth puts this latter observation memorably: "And as *Epicurus* so other Atheists in like manner, have commonly had their Vizards and Disguises; Atheism for the most part prudenly chusing to walk abroad in Masquerade. And though some over-credulous Persons have been so far imposed upon hereby, as to conclude that there was hardly any such thing as an Atheist any where in the World, yet they that are Sagacious, may easily look through these thin Veils and Disguises, and perceive these Atheists oftentimes insinuating their Atheism even then, when they most of all profess themselves Theists" (61).

terms of how bad political subjects can be described (they are at the mercy of their humors, frenzied, purely mechanical, determined, melancholic). Some of the Cambridge Platonists (like Cudworth) emphasize the first conclusion. Others (like Smith and More) emphasize the second. Both emphases work together to bring materialist thinking into mainstream defenses of institutional power as a dimension of reality to which undesirables can be consigned when they claim spiritual power. In the conclusion to this dissertation, I will further suggest that in this way the historical discourse of enthusiasm complicates the idea, voiced most powerfully by Jonathan Israel, that enlightenment should be thought of in terms of the gradual triumph of a "hylozoic monism" with progressive political and individualist upshots.[200]

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3. False Prophecy and Provisional Totality

In recent decades, a number of prominent literary scholars have studied the revival of materialisms in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, usually framing these (though often implicitly) as part of a long narrative of enlightenment and secularization. Most starkly, as in the recent work of Stephen Greenblatt, the materialist ideas incubated in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* are seen to have "made the world modern."[201] More subtly, the revival has offered a bridge between the materialist cultures of then and now, providing, if not a teleological arc, at least common ground for inter-epochal insights.

But why did this particular materialist revival find such fuel when it did—in the early seventeenth century, and particularly in the 1640s and 50s? Some have noted the importance of the "troubles" of mid-century for the awakening of atomist imagery. As Reid Barbour writes, "Especially in the years of the civil war, there is ample testimony that atomism was thought to represent and encourage 'democratical' and sectarian tendencies: the war itself was compared to

[200] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 867.
[201] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012).

the jostle of atoms, and the jostle of atoms was likened to the anarchy of popular rule."[202] As Barbour suggests, initially these appeals to atomistic imagery make little distinction as to whether "schismatics" are themselves "licentious" Epicureans, or simply mindless atoms in a random atheistical swirl. Frequently, these are seen as complementary levels of the same analysis. Whatever those so-called prophets say they experience or believe, they're obviously pagan receptacles of the "Mundane Spirit." As Ralph Cudworth writes: "[These] *Bewitched Enthusiasts* and *Blind Spiritati* […] are wholly ridden and acted by a dark, narrow and captivated Principle of Life, and, to use their own Language, *In-blown* by it." By claiming to feel the spirit, to be moved by it, popular prophets unwittingly confess, for Cudworth, that they are Epicurean sensualists "captivated" by the "Principle of Life." They are "that *Blind Goddess, Natures Fanaticks*."[203] One sees here the roots of Swift's fragment on *The Mechanical Operation of Spirit*, in which "fanatick" inspiration is reduced to the "spiritual" drives to drink and fornicate.[204]

But in first appealing to Epicureanism as a monstrous lens through which to read the "enthusiast," these defenders of the church (many of whom were affiliated with the Cambridge Platonists) also find an attractively precise system of polemical and philosophical resources. It is as though the need to critique popular spirit drives them deeper into a materialism that might permanently describe and delimit the popular body. As mentioned above, for Cudworth, whose *True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated* (1678) is a highly influential systematic attempt to synthesize understand all philosophies as emanating from a Christian-Platonic *prisca theologia*, a properly situated materialism (which he derives from Descartes) is the best defense against atheism. In fully accounting for the role of the senses in the production of experience, a Cartesian

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[202] Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 59.
[203] Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, 60.
[204] Jonathan Swift, *A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, edited by Marcus Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 165-187.

materialism robs a fully atheist materialism of its explanatory power. And in showing the existence of "a human faculty above mere sense" that "perceive[s] and judge[s] other senses," Cudworth purports to prove the connection of immanence and transcendence.[205] His massive system is thus designed to swallow the leviathan—to absorb the despiritualized philosophies of Hobbes (whom he considers a neo-Epicurean) and Lucretius into a spiritualized—and indeed Trinitarian—totality.[206]

This appropriation of materialism in a way that continues but surpasses polemic has an importance for the shape of scriptural hermeneutics as well. I want briefly to isolate one of these resources—Lucretian poetics—as it offered a way of chaining unlicensed logos down to earth. So how did it do this? The Epicurean system, as depicted by Lucretius, makes no exceptions to its materialism. There is only atom and void. Thus Lucretius describes both speech and writing as purely material processes. He writes, "Every kind of sound and voice is heard, when they have found their way into the ears and struck upon the sense with their body."[207] He goes on to describe the voice as a physical scrape and spoken words as atomic bundles flying through space, striking eardrums. Lucretian writing, too, is atomic. Those who have read him will probably recall the several passages toward the beginning of the poem where he appeals to his own poetics as a means of illustrating the Epicurean atomism he is propounding. After suggesting that the four-element theory of Empedocles is incorrect because all four elements can be reduced to the atom, Lucretius leans on the felicitous fact that *elementa*, the word that he uses for "atoms," is also the Latin for "letters of the alphabet." He writes, "Indeed scattered abroad in my verses you see many letters [*elementa*] in common to many words, and yet you must needs grant that verses and words are unlike both in sense and in the ring of their sound. So great is the power of letters by a

[205] Taliaferro and Teply, 22.
[206] Cudworth's Trinitarian rationalism would be well worth further exploring at greater length in an expanded version of this project.
[207] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 4.524-29, edited and translated by Cyril Bailey, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 389.

mere change of order."[208] Thus atoms are like letters. But this example is reversible as well. Letters are atoms. The Epicurean revivalist Walter Charleton, who was fascinated by this passage, writes: "For, if we assume only Two Letters, of them we can create only two words; if three, 6; if four, 24; if five, 120;" etc. Such factorial combinations soon "swell above our computation."[209] Language might be built from the ground up, so to speak—from letters into "Syllables, Words, Sentences, Orations, Books."[210] It might emerge from below rather than descend from on high.

Lucretius thus offers a way to model language without spirit, without divine contact—without, in Cudworth's phrase, "a Knowing and Understanding Nature" behind signification.[211] Richard Kroll's *The Material Word*, proposes that this Epicurean theory of language was tremendously influential in subsequent decades, supporting neoclassical theories of language and literature in general.[212] But it's important to keep in mind that such adaptations of the material word are generally provisional. They do not abandon revelation. They relocate its immanent form from God's first book to his second—from scripture to nature. One might recall, as Joanna Picciotto has lately invited us to do, the widespread reimagining in the late-seventeenth century of the "primitive purity" of the Edenic scene as a space not of prophetic but of natural philosophical revelation, where (in Thomas Sprat's well-known phrase) "men deliver'd so many *things*, almost in equal number of *words*."[213] In the right hands, the hands of the guarded enthusiast—the natural philosopher, the satirist, etc.—rhetoric cracks a window for revelation. But the popular prophet who would appeal eschatologically to Christian Logos is understood as fully Epicurean—a blind, closed, gross fragment of crude enthusiasm.

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[208] Lucretius, trans. Bailey, 2.633-34. See also Joseph Farrell, "The architecture of the *De rerum natura*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 90-91.
[209] Charleton, 120.
[210] Charleton, 131.
[211] Cudworth, 20.
[212] Kroll.
[213] Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, edited by Jackson I. Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones (St. Louis: Washington University Studies, 1958), 113. See Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 129 ff.

One might thus think of the discourse of enthusiasm as approaching the embodied enthusiast through a guarded materialism. This is true beyond the adaptation of a strictly Lucretian materialism. A number of materialist ontological paradigms are taken to apply to *them*—but not to *us*. The situating of the enthusiast within an ontological "slice" of nature finds another important conceptual resource in the familiar Aristotelian ordering of the soul—which associates different soul functions with different levels of natural complexity: the vegetable soul of plants is devoted to material growth; the animal soul of animals adds to the vegetable properties the instincts; the intellectual soul of humans adds to the animal soul the capacity to think and reflect.[214] Aristotle's schema thus thickens the rational prophet trope introduced in the last chapter. The rational prophet is aligned with the intellectual, and the irrational, false prophet with the sensual soul.

Consider, for instance, the thought of John Smith. In his posthumously published discourse *Of Prophesie* (1660; this is cited from the 1672 edition), Smith summarizes this approach to the false prophet as follows:

> [T]he *Prophetical* spirit doth never alienate the Mind, (seeing it seats it self as well in the *Rational* powers as in the *Sensitive*,) but alwaies maintains a consistency and clearness of Reason, strength and soliditie of Judgment, where it comes; it doth not *ravish* the Mind, but *inform* and *enlighten* it: But the *Pseudo prophetical* spirit, if indeed without any kind of dissimulation it enters into any one, because it can rise no higher than the Middle regions of Man, which is his *Fancy*, it there dwells as in storms and tempests [and] is also conjoined with alienations and abreptions of mind.[215]

According to the Aristotelian psychology on which Smith relies, the false prophetic spirit can only seize upon the lower and middle regions of the soul, the senses and the imagination. False

[214] See Aristotle, *De Anima* ii.11, 423a20–6.
[215] Heyd, 185.

prophecy swallows one from the bottom up, travelling through the senses to abduct the imagination, but never reaching the crystalline upper region of the intellect. In so doing, false prophecy *alienates* and *abrepts* the mind from itself, dragging the fancy down to the realm of the senses. True prophecy, on the contrary, addresses at once the rational and sensitive faculties. In discussing true prophecy, Smith makes no mention of the fancy or imagination, although its presence is implied in the assumption that true prophecy is addressed instantaneously to the whole architecture of the soul. It is a divine address to the whole being. One might say that in the true prophetic experience, the imagination is safely provided for, defended on one side by the concrete solidity of sense, on the other by the serene ideal of reason. The fancy is locked up and safely sleeping in a tower.

For Smith, prophecy addresses the prophet instantaneously from above; false prophecy insinuates itself into the prophet gradually from beneath; true prophecy is at once sensory and reasonable; false prophecy is at once sensual and imaginative. When he turns to some of the many scenes of prophecy in the Bible that trouble his schema—the many instances of "panic fears, consternations, affrightments, and tremblings" found in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, for instance—Smith continues to insist that the energy of the spirit in true prophecy is distinct from that in false.[216] It is vital and direct whereas false prophecy is "*more dilute* and *languid*," and "tending to nourish immorality and prophaneness."[217] Even in its most violent visitations, as in Jeremiah 23:29, true prophecy "enter[s] upon the Mind *as a fire*, and *like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces*."[218] So the sensory dimension of true prophecy is marked not by insinuation and pleasure but by pain and intensity. This is a manly way of prophesying.

Smith thus offers what I have called in my introduction a physiological theory of mimesis. He emphasizes the way in which false aspirants to prophecy are not able to reflect the divine

[216] Heyd, 186.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

intelligence. They are only able to reflect their own embodiment—their own earthly imagination. The middle-region that should mediate between the material and intellectual regions of reality, the fancy, does not mediate at all. It is not clear. It does not let light through. Instead, like a mirror pointing downward at the material order, it only reflects the material and sensual conditions of the false prophet's own body and experiences. The false prophet's imagination can be described as acting here as a sort of solipsistic or monadic mirror situated at the level of the imagination, merely hurling around and recombining its own disordered reflection. One might recall those moments in Shakespeare's *Tempest* when Ariel possesses the sensoria of the conspirators and fills their imaginations with visions of hell. But here there is no clear case of possession. False prophets are possessed by themselves alone. They are closed hermeneutical circles—all senses, no matter-escaping reason. So this is Smith's philosophical approach to the problem around which our discussion is centered—the problem of how, in conditions of widespread doctrinal difference, to sort true from false forms of contact with the divine. He rearticulates heresy as a form of merely materialist being—as possession of the imagination, here rendered as a type of pseudo-divine mirror or inner image-maker, by the body. True prophecy, Smith suggests, addresses the prophet serenely from above, as reason; false prophecy insinuates itself into the prophet gradually from beneath; true prophecy is at once sensory and reasonable; false prophecy is at once sensual and imaginative.

And, of course, the suggestions of gender are also crucial here. The association of women and workers with the sensual and mechanical rather than the intellectual dimensions of experience is of course at least as old as Aristotle. Here it is a polemical resource for discrediting and pathologizing those—including many prophesying women—who were accruing to themselves spiritual authority outside of traditional hierarchies of church and state.[219] They are

[219] This subject has been widely studied in recent decades. See, e.g., Mack; Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds. *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1998; Sylvia M. Brown, ed. *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: E. J. Brill, 2007).

out of their minds, Smith suggests, dreaming with eyes open, possessed by sensual imaginations, and divorced from the realm of sound and serene reasons. They might say that they come from God, or that we all come from God, or some such twaddle. But in doing so they only confess that they have taken leave of their better judgment. They are alienated from themselves. Don't listen to them.

Smith's fellow Cambridge Platonist Henry More takes this association of false prophecy with the mechanical and physical dimensions of bodily being still further. In *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (first published in 1656 and frequently reprinted through the eighteenth century), More systematically reduces all claims to spiritual authority to humoral disorders, fits of melancholy, literal bellyaching. As More puts it:

> The *Spirit* then that wings the *Enthusiast* in such a wonderful manner, is nothing else but that *Flatulency* which is in the *Melancholy* complexion, and rises out of the *Hypochondriacal* humour upon some occasional heat, as *Winde* out of an *AEolipila* [this is an alchemical vessel also known as a Hero engine] applied to the fire. Which fume mounting into the Head, being first actuated and spirited and somewhat refined by the warmth of the Heart, fills the Mind with variety of *Imaginations*, and so quickens and inlarges *Invention*, that it makes the *Enthusiast* to admiration *fluent* and *eloquent*, he being as it were drunk with new wine drawn from that Cellar of his own that lies in the lowest region of his Body, though he be not aware of it, but takes it to be pure *Nectar*, and those waters of life that spring from above.[220]

Whereas Smith despiritualizes the enthusiast in a Neo-Aristotelian register, distinguishing the lower levels of the false prophetic souls from the reasonableness of the true prophet, More draws

[220] More, *ET*, 12.

upon Galenic and alchemical-physiological concepts.[221] It is as though he is saying, "You think you are a conduit for God, Enthusiast; others think you are possessed by demons. But I know that you are cut off from spirit altogether." And, as is very important, More's discussion has a rhetorical dimension as well. "You think you speak with an angel's tongue, Enthusiast; others think you speak with a devil's. But I know you are just a teapot boiling your own bowels and giving out a pretty whistle." Both More and Smith rely upon the same basic model. The sensory regions take possession of the imagination and leave the intellect untouched. The intellect is reserved for the divine and associated with reason. The imagination is consigned to the disordered subject, the alienated self, and associated with mere materiality. The concept of the material self thus enters the intellectual vocabulary of England in large part as an innovative synonym for the false prophet.

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4. Enthusiasms, Philosophical and Political

One of More's key distinctions in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* makes this process—the provisional adoption of a materialist ontology in order to despiritualize the enthusiast—especially clear. In taxonomizing enthusiasm, More separates "political enthusiasts," on the one hand, from "philosophical enthusiasts," on the other. Political enthusiasts are those "whose temper carries them most to Political affaires, who love rule and honour and have a strong sense of civil rights[.] Melancholy heating them makes them sometimes fancy themselves great Princes (at least by divine assignment) & deliverers of the people sent from God."[222] These are the real problem enthusiasts—eager to seize political authority "by divine assignment" from the powers that be. Think of Prophet Hunt or the Saints of the New Model Army. These so-called prophets are neither inspired by the Holy Spirit (as they claim) nor possessed by the devil (as their opponents claim). They are simply material bodies "intoxicated," More writes, "with vapours from the

[221] More's counter-enthusiasm begins as a response to alchemy. See discussion below.
[222] *ET*, 30.

lowest region of their Body, as the *Pythia* of old are conceived to have been inspired through the power of certain exhalations breathed from those caverns they had their recesse in."[223]

But there's also another, "philosophical" variety of enthusiasm belonging to the intellectual—the Paracelsian doctor, the alchemist, the Epicurean. Philosophical enthusiasts are those "of a more speculative and Philosophical complexion," whom melancholy makes "prone to […] the curious contemplation of things." In this camp, More lists those alchemists, theosophists, and Epicureans who believe (for instance) "that Nature is the Body of God […], who is also the World, and whatsoever is any way sensible or perceptible."[224] Often, their problem is not that they're material, but that they're materialists. More writes, "[They] profess, That every thing is God in love or wrath"—reflecting the Heraclitian sense of atoms as subject to the forces of love and strife—"Which […] is no better then *Atheisme*. For it implies that God is nothing else but the *universall Matter* of the world […]. But to slice God into so many parts is to wound him and kill him, and to make no God at all."[225]

More identifies both political and philosophical enthusiasms as dangerous forms of "melancholy." In so doing he draws upon a long tradition of Galenic medicine which conceives of the bodily spirits as subject to four humors—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—which must remain balanced for proper physical and psychological functioning. When one of these humors dominates the bodily system, illness results. Melancholy results from an abundance of black bile, the dry and cold humor associated with earth—and hence, in More's philosophical interpretation of the humors, from a systematic overbalance of *matter*.[226] Thus More takes

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[223] *ET*, 39.
[224] *ET*, 39, 42.
[225] *ET*, 48.
[226] Cf. Galen's description of the melancholy complexion with More's application of the concept to enthusiasm: "[T]hey dream of frightful things, black, darkness, and terrible businesses." See Galen, *Galen's art of physick ... translated into English, and largely commented on*, translated by Nicholas Culpepper (1652), 55. The notion of melancholy—and the influence of Galenic medicine more generally on early modern representation—has attracted much attention from literary scholars in recent years. For a work that considers melancholy as a conceptual "assemblage" in a way that contrasts with my consideration here of the role of this humor in contributing the enlightenment rationalization

philosophical enthusiasm to be a medical condition. But it's clear that he sees much more harm in the former—political enthusiasm—than the philosophical variety of this disease. Indeed, More thinks of philosophical enthusiasm more in terms of folly than treason. His earliest counter-enthusiastic writings make this quite clear. They are directed against Thomas Vaughan—twin brother of the mystically-inclined poet, Henry Vaughan—an alchemist, hermetic philosopher, author of widely read works on "natural magic," and Church of England clergyman.[227] It's hard to avoid the impression that More's hostility to Vaughan, as he himself nearly admits in his polemical attacks, stems in part from a strong feeling of resemblance. As Daniel Fouke puts it:

> The origins of More's own understanding of the spiritual life in ecstatic, mystical, and aesthetic experiences suggest a deeply 'enthusiastical' element in More. He was not unaware of his own cast of mind, and turned it into a qualification for criticizing Vaughan, because 'wee are growne near kin in temper and complexion, so we ought Mutually to allow each other in our actings alike, according to our common temper and nature.'[228]

More's aversion to Vaughan's enthusiasm, then, follows from a feeling of being *almost* Vaughan, or of having once been Vaughan, or of fearing he might be Vaughan—as though he sees in Vaughan a distorted and foolish version of himself.[229] A particularly sore point is Vaughan's simultaneous attachment to Platonism (which More professes) and alchemy (which More detests). In their exchange, More attempts at several points to wrestle Plato back to the side of "reason"—for example: "Put thy soul into a crysiple, O pragmatical chemist [i.e. alchemist], and set it on that

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paradigm, see Drew Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

[227] These attacks occur in [Alazonomastix Philalethes], *Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica and Anima Magica Abscondita* [by Eugenius Philalethes, i.e. Thomas Vaughan] (London, 1650) and Idem., *The Second Lash of Alazonomastix: Conteining a Solid and Serious Reply to a very uncivill Answer to certain Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica*… (London, 1651). See Frederic B. Burnham, "The More-Vaughan Controversy: The Revolt Against Philosophical Enthusiasm," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35.1 (1974): 33-49.

[228] Fouke, 102.

[229] A standard view of More is that he is as enthusiastic as any he attacks. See Lichtenstein, 19-20, which collects quotes to this effect from Leigh Hunt, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Tulloch, etc.

fire that will excoct and purge out thy drosse, and then judge of Platonisme."[230] Here, as in the passages from *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* we've already seen, More takes alchemy to be a metaphorical resource for the handling of matter. He invites Vaughan to purify his soul in some imaginary crysiple. Elsewhere he compares the enthusiastic body—in this case imagined not according to the Epicurean paradigm of political enthusiasm but in terms of an alchemical paradigm—to alchemical equipment overheating one's choler. At any rate, these are not images that bear much pressing. There is much evidence that later in his life More regretted these early quasi-satirical, quasi-serious attacks on Vaughan's "enthusiasm"—and tried to write them off as more in jest than an actual reading (and Vaughan's indignant responses) might suggest.[231]

The point is, philosophical enthusiasm is not the root problem for More. Political enthusiasm is. Indeed, More participates in his own sort of provisional philosophical materialism—offering his own recipe for reducing spirit to matter—in order to address the political core of the concept. As one will have noticed, More's imagery draws on a different materialist vocabulary from Cudworth's. Whereas Cudworth is concerned with the way in which enthusiasts are Epicurean atheists, More thinks of them in terms of alchemy and the Galenic humors. This difference is important, especially as it helps to establish the atheist materialism of political enthusiasts as more dangerous, ultimately, than the Galenic or Paracelsian materialisms of philosophical enthusiasts. But these two thinkers also share a broad structural similarity. They take up a materialist perspective in a provisional way in order to pathologize and despiritualize enthusiasts. The one, Cudworth, does so on behalf of a philosophical system. The other, More, does so ultimately—as we will see in the sections that follow—on behalf of a theory of meaning.

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[230] *The Second Lash of Alazonomastix*, 208. Quoted in Burnham, 40.
[231] See *Grand Mystery,* preface. Robert Crocker, "Henry More: A Biographical Essay," 5. Marjorie Nicholson takes More's side. See Nicholson, *Conway Letters*, 72-73.

Subsequently More's distinction between philosophical and political enthusiasm is very widely adapted. One finds it in John Smith, Joseph Glanvill, and others.[232] Even where it is not named, its basic structure is respected. The architects of enthusiasm — whether More, Locke, or Swift —provisionally occupy the materialist position of the philosophical enthusiast. They entertain materialism insofar as this provides a conceptual vocabulary for getting beneath or around popular appeals to spirit. But they keep their gloves on. They buffer their engagement with materialism, leaving room for true inspiration or some other means of conceptual escape.

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5. The Sanguine Enthusiast

So far we have discussed the ways that the Cambridge Platonists explain the cause of the crisis of popular prophetic authority in terms of material-physical illness. Those calling themselves prophets are really melancholiacs. Such enthusiasts are trapped in their material bodies, mimetically entangled with the base layer of being, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Their exegetical and exhortative language should be treated as basically meaningless—a sometimes incidentally gorgeous whistling produced by overactive spleens. And we have pivoted firmly to More as particularly representative of this tendency.

But this is not where More's etiology of enthusiasm ends. While he is well known for reducing enthusiasm to melancholy, this is simply one move among several that he brings to the discourse—and, at least from his own perspective, it is not the most important. For the most part, More does present enthusiasts as afflicted by melancholy. But his counter-enthusiasm does not

[232] See, e.g., John Smith, *Select discourses* (London: Printed by J. Flesher, for W. Morden, 1660), xxiii; John Flavel, *Pneumatologia, a treatise of the soul of man wherein the divine original, excellent and immortal nature of the soul are opened* (1685), 2. The notion of "philosophical enthusiasm," it should be added, is also found in Casaubon, 48 ff. The notion of "political enthusiasm," meanwhile, has a long afterlife in enlightenment thinking. It is an important concept, for instance, for Immanuel Kant, and for subsequent Kantian political thought. See Kant, "A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: 'Is the Human Race Continually Improving?'" in *Kant: Political Writings*, edited by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 182 ff. See also Andrew Poe, *The Sources and Limits of Political Enthusiasm*. PhD dissertation, UC San Diego, 2010: b6917967. Retrieved from: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7x24v971.

limit enthusiasm to the prevalence of this one humor. The longest discussion of any individual enthusiast in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* concerns a person who is not melancholy at all (at least in More's telling). On the contrary, this enthusiast, David George, is sanguine—flush with blood, cheerful, soft-spoken. If (to borrow a term from Shapin and Schaffer) the "virtual witnessing" of the enthusiast we've seen so far has been quite straightforward—with the enthusiast depicted as frenzied, prone to profound despair, visibly hallucinating, etc.—this sanguine enthusiast complicates matters.[233] He raises new problems for the discourse of enthusiasm—what to do about an enthusiast who does not appear to be enthusiastic, whose enthusiasm is not so easily legible.

The enthusiast whom More chooses for this purpose is David George, known to historians as David Joris, a sixteenth-century Anabaptist from the Netherlands. A disciple of Melchior Hoffman, Joris rose to prominence following the failure of the Münster Rebellion. Though he was among the peacemakers who quelled the calls for vengeance among the Anabaptists following the retaking of Münster, his association with that event secured him a place among the rolls of radical Protestant monstrosities that haunted Europe for centuries.[234] We've already seen his followers classified in the rogues gallery of heretics in Featley's *Dippers Dipt*. He appears as a similarly villainous figure in over two hundred additional English publications between the mid-sixteenth and the early eighteenth century.[235] His theological views—which apparently included a theoretical defense of polygamy (though it is not clear whether he practiced this himself) and a standard Anabaptist sense that he was living in a time of a third divine dispensation of the Holy Spirit following the earlier dispensations of the Son and the Father—are regularly decried and distorted in these works. For the most part, he appears like other "fanatic" figures of the time—raving, milky-eyed, possessed, overheated.

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[233] Shapin and Schaffer, 60 ff.
[234] For a selection and careful study of Joris' theological writings, see David Joris, *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris, 1535-1543*, edited by Gary K. Waite (Huntington, IN: Herald Press, 2013).
[235] *EEBO* search.

Henry More handles George very differently. His initial description of George is worth quoting at length:

> This *David George*, a man of very low parentage, was yet, in the judgment of his very enemies, one of notable natural parts, a comely person to look upon, and of a gracefull presence. He was also square of body, yellow-bearded, gray-ey'd, bright and shining, grave and sedate in speech; in a word, all his motions, gestures and demeanours were so decent and becoming, as if he had been wholly composed to honesty and godlinesse. He lived very splendidly and magnificently in his house, and yet without the least stir or disorder. He was a religious frequenter of the Church, a liberall reliever of the poor, a comfortable visiter of the sick, obedient to the Magistrate, kind and affable to all persons.[236]

Nothing about George's appearance or "motions" gives him away. He has no "pale wasted Melancholy countenance."[237] He doesn't speak zealously or shrilly. And yet, hiding within this square, bearded surface is a viper's nest of doctrinal errors, all tending to reinforce a belief that "*David George* is the *true Christ* and *Messias*," who will "restore the house of *Israel*."[238] He further claims, according to More, "the power of the remission of sins," and the power to remit or pardon "all sin and blasphemy against the Father or the Sonne" (but not against "the holy Ghost, that is, against *David George*"). He declares, "the holy Scriptures, the sayings and testimonies of the Prophets, of Christ and of his Apostles do all point, if rightly understood in the mystery of them, to the glorious coming of *David George*." And he further declares that many other aspects of the scriptures should be interpreted morally, not literally: e.g. "That Angels and Devils are onely good men and evil men, or their Virtues and Vices."[239]

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[236] *ET*, 23.
[237] *ET,* 31.
[238] *ET,* 23.
[239] *ET*, 23.

More's description of George—this particular piece of virtual witnessing—is almost a fable itself. George appears to be upright, healthy, doctrinaire. But peer into his actual beliefs—and behold a deadly sinkhole. More does offer a physiological explanation for this particularly dangerous sort of enthusiast. He is dominated by sanguine. As such, he appears fresh and healthy. His language is orderly. His surface is in fine repair. But the sanguine enthusiast is in fact the worst kind. Whereas the melancholy enthusiast does not conceal enthusiasm, the sanguine enthusiast does. This is a Machiavellian sort of enthusiast—a hypocrite. He conceals his doctrine—which thus only poisons his followers gradually, insinuatingly. He is, as More says, "discreet in all things, very cunning in some, as in his closenesse and reservednesse in his Doctrine to those of *Basil* [where Joris lived after leaving Münster] … to whom he communicated not one *Iota* of it, but yet he sedulously dispersed it in the further parts of *Germany* both by books and letters."[240] Many leaders of sects and founders of false doctrine are similarly sanguine enthusiasts. Henry More includes among these "Mahomet," whose prominent role in the figuration of enthusiasm deserves a study unto itself, and Henry Nicholis, the founder of the Familists, whom we will consider below.

On one level, Henry More solves a particularly difficult problem for the discourse of enthusiasm—what to do about enthusiasts who do not appear enthusiastic—by appealing to another material cause, not melancholy but sanguine. But this is not the final point of his discussion of David George. George is not just provisionally materialized. His figuration provides an occasion to explore a deeper problem in the discourse of enthusiasm—and allows both More and the present discussion to pivot to what we might call a mature counter-enthusiasm concerned not merely with a medical symptomatology but with an *allegorical* symptomatology. More sees enthusiasm ultimately not as a humoral disorder but as a typological disorder. What

[240] *ET*, 33.

must be interrogated, finally, is not the enthusiast himself, but the theory of the Word and its relation to history and experience which the enthusiast professes.

To state the point directly, the political enthusiast—and the sanguine is the most successful, most insidious sort of political enthusiast, because he is able to conceal and insinuate his motives—is ultimately an advocate of a scriptural allegory which reads the Bible as anticipating his or her own present experience. The ultimate referent of the scripture, in this view, is the reader's own life. This is why the doctrinal revelations fall with such tragicomic gravity in More's rehearsal. The ultimate savior prophesied by the scriptures is—*David George*. The person on whom the dispensation of the spirit is balanced is—*David George*. People should feel free to marry as many people as they wish—*So saith David George*. The alpha and the omega is—*David George*. More obviously wants to deflate this perspective. But he also finds it terrifying—because, I would suggest, from some solipsistic or skeptical threshold, "David George" (or the overweening reader for whom this figure is itself an allegory) has a point. Any given reader is an experiential horizon within whom signification—even divine signification—maps its constellations. The enthusiast refers language to himself. This is his great error. This is the great temptation that must, for More, be identified and resisted. He is—literally—a self-fulfilling prophet.

Thus More finally theorizes the incarnate dimension of the enthusiast as a bad sort of allegorical framing. He sees the enthusiast's body as grossly distorted by pride such that it takes itself to be the tenor of scripture, the prophesied reincarnation of divinity on earth. He must show, then, that "it is *the Reign of Sanguine*, not *the Rule of the Spirit*," which dominates enthusiastic hermeneutics.[241] (One can see how similar this perspective is to Luther's—albeit here tethered to a medical discourse as well as a theological.)[242]

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[241] *ET*, 35.

[242] The links between More and Luther are quite deep, beginning with their common devotion to the *Theologia Germanica*, the medieval devotional work that Luther revived and lauded during the early Reformation.

He does this in part by virtually witnessing the degree to which the sanguine enthusiast cares for his own flesh and blood. Unlike Jesus Christ, who willingly dies in the most agonizing manner to prove his divinity, David George and his followers bear such "tender love … to their own dear carkases" that they would not "suffer the least aching of their little fingers by way of external *Martyrdome* for any Religion." More continues, "and therefore their prudence and discretion consists most in juglings, equivocations, and slight tergiversations, peaceable compliances with any thing rather than to suffer in body or goods: which is the natural dictate of *Sanguine* triumphant."[243] David George's self-care, far from exhibiting anything like sanity, in fact shows him to be a false prophet so idolatrously devoted to his own corporeal soundness that he would rather hide his doctrines—that is, the doctrines referring the whole universe back to himself—than suffer for them.

More's counter-enthusiasm thus sees the enthusiast as having replaced the incarnation of the Word—that is, the life of the Messiah—with his own incarnation. He finally diagnoses not the melancholy, but the allegory of the enthusiast. Where the Christian ought to route all meaning through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and read all events—natural, social, and personal—as shadows of that event, the enthusiast does the opposite. He reads Jesus Christ—and all things else—as types of himself, mapped on to his own psycho-sexual cosmos.

The force of this point might be developed by turning briefly to two sources: first, the Biblical precedents for the figuration of the prophet as a hypocrite—a wolf in sheep's clothing, as the phrase has it; and second, Erich Auerbach's discussion of Christian *figura* as "historically real prophecy."[244] More himself certainly has the former source constantly in mind as he thinks about the arcane semiotic structure of enthusiasm, and Auerbach's careful situating of the place of figuration in the history of representation should prepare for the discussion of More's *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, the work in which he systematically distinguishes enthusiasm and

[243] *ET*, 25.
[244] Auerbach, "Figura."

orthodoxy on the basis of their different attitudes toward incarnation—with the former understanding incarnation as reference to the immanent body of the reading subject, and the latter understanding incarnation as the literal, historically real transformation of the Word of God into flesh—the prophetic Eucharist at the basis of orthodox Christian doctrine. This chapter will close with a discussion of this work.

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6. Allegories of Enthusiasm

We have already mentioned the Mosaic test for determining a false prophet. A true prophet, according to Deuteronomy, 1) professes to be a messenger for the doctrinally recognized deity, not for a rival deity (in which case that prophet must be interpreted as a temptation sent by God to see who really fears him); 2) performs miracles and accurately foretells events (and in thus controlling and foreseeing natural events channels the creator of nature).[245] Doctrine precedes empirical evidence. False prophets might work miracles—but if so, they will profess strange gods. Likewise, they might profess the true God—but in this case, their miracles and predictions will fail. While there are a number of moments in the Old Testament where this two-gate schema is tested, it consistently holds.[246]

But this is not the only schema for detecting false prophets. There is also the very well known hypocrisy test formulated in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. […] Wherefore by their fruits ye

[245] Deuteronomy 13.1-3, 18.18-22.

[246] See, e.g., Jeremiah 28, 1 Kings 22. In the former instance, Jeremiah foresees the Babylonian Captivity and Hananiah counter-prophesies against this. Soon after, Hananiah dies, "proving" Jeremiah to be the true prophet in the contest. In 1 Kings, Micaiah prophesies the defeat of Ahab and Jehosaphat at Ramoth-gilead. Four hundred other prophets prophesy victory. The kings are defeated, revealing Micaiah to be the one true prophet and the four hundred to be deceivers sent by God to test the faithful.

shall know them.[247]

As the chapter continues, Jesus expressly compares the hypocrisy test to the Mosaic test of false prophets, suggesting (as the Sermon on the Mount often suggests) that he is surpassing and fulfilling the earlier standard: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."[248] According to Jesus, a prophet might come in his name, and work miracles, and still be false. Prophetic truth and falsity is to be judged not by the evidentiary standards of the Mosaic checkpoints—doctrinal and then empirical. It is to be judged by the prophet's works—their fruits. Miracles and predictions aren't enough. As he says later in Matthew: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."[249] And this idea is developed by Paul in 2 Corinthians: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."[250] Thus Christianity extends the temporality of prophetic judgment. It is not enough for a prophet to seem to profess the right doctrine and perform miracles. One must wait for the fruits of a purported prophet's ministry to judge whether they come from God or Satan.[251]

One can clearly see the indebtedness of More's depiction of David George to this discursive context. He is literally depicted as a false Christ almost capable of deceiving "the very

[247] Matt 7.15-17, 20.
[248] Matt 7.22-23.
[249] Matt 24.24.
[250] 2 Cor 11.13-15.
[251] And indeed, this shift in prophetic judgment largely mirrors the increased theological emphasis on Satan as a formidable rival to God. Prophets might come not from God (and in the Old Testament, all prophets, even Gentile prophets like Balaam, are ultimately controlled by God) but from "the father of lies." Cf. Numbers 22.21-38, John 8.44.

elect"—for example, those parishioners of Basel among whom he worshipped. And not just George but also the sanguine enthusiast in general appears to be "an angel of light," golden and serene. Beneath the surface, of course, there lurks a wolf.

But what are the fruits or works by which such a prophet might be known? This is a famously difficult question. Must one merely wait around to see whether the prophet does something unholy—like accept money for their services? (This appears to be one key upshot of the stories regarding Simon Magus, who was widely taken to be the original false prophet during the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and beyond.)[252] Or does one wait to see whether mostly good or mostly bad things stem from their lives? And do they have to be living when they are revealed to be evil? And what internal mechanism produces the evil fruits and works? Mixed intentions? An intention to deceive? Can a false prophet think that he is working for God? Or must he know he is in the service of Satan?

The tendency, at least in the broadly Protestant traditions with which we are primarily concerned in this study, is to locate the source producing good versus evil fruits not in the evidence of this life but in the attitude toward the divine experienced by the purported prophet. Is the prophet appropriating the name of God for his own glory, or seeking "the glory of the one who sent him"?[253] As Calvin puts it:

> [W]hat are the fruits which Christ points out[?] Those who confine them to the life are, in my opinion, mistaken. As pretended sanctity, and I know not what masks belonging to greater austerity of life, are frequently held out by some of the worst impostors, this would be a very uncertain test. Their hypocrisy, I do own, is at length discovered; for nothing is more difficult than to counterfeit virtue. But Christ

[252] For a thorough study of the history of the representation of Simon Magus, see Alberto Ferreiro, *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005).
[253] John 7.18. This is the *New International Version* translation, where the sense of the passage is clearer than in the *KJV*.

> did not intend to submit his doctrine to a decision so unjust in itself, and so liable to be misunderstood, as to have it estimated by the life of men.

Calvin charges Christians nevertheless to observe the manner in which a prophet or teacher of religion professes and to rely on the scriptures to determine whether or not these teachings come from God or Satan. He continues: "Believers are never deprived of the Spirit of wisdom, where his assistance is needful, provided they distrust themselves, renounce their own judgment, and give themselves up wholly to his direction. Let us remember, however, that all doctrines must be brought to the Word of God as the standard, and that, in judging of false prophets, the rule of faith holds the chief place."[254]

In the case of David George, More supports—while adjusting—Calvin's conclusions. The fruits by which he is known are his writings—his "works" in a sense not intended in the Gospels. These reveal his evil doctrines, which in turn reflect his interest in his own glory rather than the glory of God. Indeed, More literalizes and exaggerates these elements. George's concern for his own bodily integrity proves the degree to which he situates himself at the heart of doctrine. Thus his doctrines are obviously self-worshipping. The problems with George's purported theology are still clearer when read in light of 1 John:

> Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.[255]

In a way, John's schema for detecting false prophets returns to the Mosaic schema. He sets up a new doctrinal gate. Does the purported prophet confess the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ?

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[254] See Jean Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (3. vols.). Cited from the online edition at the *CCEL*.
[255] 1 John 4.1-3.

If so, listen. If not, don't listen. Indeed, the second standard of miracles and predictions is even more subordinate in John's schema. The confession of doctrinal faith is itself testimony to a miraculous presence of spirit. Doctrine and miracle are here folded into one another.

Clearly, George, as presented by More, fails this test. He does not confess "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"; rather, he interprets his own flesh as the tenor to Christ's vehicle. The universe is an allegory of himself. He reverses the valence of prophetic figuration, claiming to be the arcane signified hidden in the allegory of Christianity, and finally revealed. Further, to claim to fulfill the law and the prophets is, of course, profoundly anti-Christian. The Christian allegory of history situates present experience not at the end—not at the fulfillment—but within a period of waiting, during which one might be filled with spirit (if one recognizes and accepts the incarnation of God) but only as a vehicle or channel for that spirit, not as its signified. As Erich Auerbach puts it:

> We thus see—as in several of the earlier writers, but more pronouncedly in Augustine—that the juxtaposition of two poles, figure and fulfillment [which characterizes an earlier form of figuration], is sometimes replaced by a three-step process: first, the Law, or the history of the Jews as a prophetic *figura* of the coming of Christ; then, the Incarnation, or the fulfillment of this *figura*, which is simultaneously a new promise of the end of the world and the Last Judgment; and, finally, the future advent of these events as the final fulfillment.[256]

This captures the correct orientation toward temporality, according to More. Oneself might be understood as present in a larger history of the progress of the Word in the world—but not as the Word made flesh. One is located between the cosmic realities of Incarnation and Last Judgment. One can refer backward or forward to these events. But one cannot claim them as one's own.

[256] Auerbach, "Figura," 87.

The discourse of enthusiasm is revealed, in More, as a philological quest for the allegorical core of professed belief. The false enthusiast reads experience as an allegory of presently lived experience. The literality supporting this allegory is his own flesh. The true enthusiast reads experience in the opposite way. The literalities supporting one's own shadowy existence are, on one side, the Incarnation of God's creative Word, and, on the other, the Judgement and the hereafter. As Auerbach puts it: "this life is only an *umbra* and *figura* of the actual, future, final, and authentic truth that, both unveiling and preserving the figure, contains true reality."[257]

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7. Against the New Man

Thus More shifts the stress in the discourse of enthusiasm from embodiment—that is, from an emphasis on the humoral conditions of false prophetic experiences—to incarnation—to an emphasis on the attitude toward the literal divinity and historical reality of Jesus. He sees the denial of the literal reality of Christ as the doctrinal core of enthusiasm. The allegoricization of Christ becomes the means by which false prophets in the new age both claim Jesus and work in his name—and deny him, and subvert true religion. Thus the distorted figure of the enthusiast we see in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, in which the enthusiast is generally depicted as a surface agitated by internal humors, gives way to a distorted enthusiastic *figura*, a mishapen allegorical surface atop a corrupt doctrine.

This allegorical counter-enthusiasm is presented at length in More's *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660). The preface to this work presents it as at once the presentation of his mature theology and the culmination of his counter-enthusiastic efforts—a third and final phase opposing enthusiasm following, first, his youthful attacks on Vaughan's philosophical enthusiasm and, second, his medicalization of the enthusiast in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*. Indeed,

[257] Auerbach, "Figura," 110.

More sees these tasks as linked. By provisionally inhabiting, bearing witness to, and exploring the interiority of the false enthusiast, More is able to articulate what comprises true inspiration.[258] He thus presents himself as a figure whom it is safe to occupy in a reader's search for true doctrine.

More begins the *Explanation* with a short scholarly autobiography attesting to his education, his temperament, and the various works he has felt called to produce. This method contrast with that of the enthusiast (as he sees it). Where they hide their doctrines for as long as possible, until they have long insinuated themselves into their hearers, More proposes to make his doctrines directly clear: he will show "the Reasonableness and important Usefulness of Christian Religion *in the* Historical *sense thereof, and in reference to the very Person of Christ our Saviour*."[259] Thus he shows the role his own life—his own embodiment—plays in his hermeneutics. It is an important role. But it is also explicit and limited. He is not going to allegorize himself and call it Christianity. He is going to show how he understands himself as a little means of helping to reveal a greater truth. As More puts it at one point, "The Divinity in Christ is as the Light in the Sun; the Divinity in his Members as the Sun-shine in the Aire."[260] Divinity streams through him. But it does not emanate from him. He is a medium, not a source of light.

This approach contrasts, as he sees it, with that of the enthusiasts, who "clothe their style with Scripture-language, though they were worse Infidels than the very heathen."[261] In *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, More similarly evinces a reluctant admiration for the surface style of enthusiasts:

> For a man illiterate … but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally [and naturally is not a good thing here] contract a more winning and commanding Rhetorick then those that are learned; the intermixture of Tongues and of artificiall Phrases [in the learned] debasing their style, and making it sound more after the

[258] Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), vi. *EEBO*. Hereafter cited as *GM*.
[259] *GM*, vi.
[260] *GM*, 14.
[261] *GM*, 152.

> manner of men, though ordinarily there may be more of God in it then in that of the *Enthusiast*.[262]

The *Grand Mystery* makes plain what More means when he says that there is more "of God" in the orthodox divine than in the enthusiast. He means that there is more of the doctrine of the incarnation in orthodox sermonizing, even if this doctrine is unnecessarily clothed in Latin and Greek phrases, and thus only darkly visible. The Incarnation is the kernel of God in a good sermon. The enthusiast does not profess the Incarnation, only his own flesh. While his style might be simple and attractive, and thus seem holy—and in this respect be very much worthy of emulation by the actually holy—the doctrinal core of his teaching shows it for what it is: an imposture. As he puts it: "[T]his is the wicked plot of the Devil in this Sect, that he clothes their Style with Scripture-language, that they may as it were wear the colours of the *Kingdome of Light*, and so covertly destroy or win the Christian Souldiers from their allegiance to Christ, and lapse them into the bondage of the *dark Kingdome*."[263] Style too becomes an element in a larger allegory of doctrine. It too is a sort of sheep's clothing—like the ruddy and serene face of David George.

More understands this struggle—if an apparent oxymoron might be allowed—in *literally* allegorical terms. We've already looked at his observation that enthusiasts are "poets in earnest." This can be paired with the observation that *good* theologians are allegorists in earnest, who see history as a drama of signification centered on the story of Jesus' Incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. This is the real anchor of meaning in history. All other true meaning is a shadowy form of this true meaning, and thus allegorical—but allegory rooted in the invisible reality of the divine. More thus frequently compares his work that that of Edmund Spenser (who was incidentally one of More's favorite writers from youth forward).[264] When apologizing for the

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[262] *ET*, 24.
[263] *GM*, 154.
[264] This connection between More and Spenser is worth developing in an expanded version of this project (or in a separate article). The comparison would illuminate, I presume, the status of reality both in More's uses of figuration and in Spenser's own allegorical poetics.

presentation of enthusiastic doctrines in his work, he even expressly names Spenser: "But *Duessa* till unstripped will compare with *Una*; you know the story in *Spencer*."[265] Critics sometimes wonder about the role allegory like Spenser might have been understood to play in the articulation of Protestant doctrine. After all, if Protestants are so concerned with literal meaning, why do they produce allegories like *The Faerie Queene* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, to name the two most obvious?[266] More provides something of an answer. Spenser's—and his—foregrounding of allegory clarifies the degree to which a dedication to the literal truth of scripture requires an as it were experiential suspension of literal satisfaction. One must believe in the incarnation of God. But one can only experience this incarnation symbolically, in a mediated fashion. The historical reality on which one's faith is predicated is not physically present. Thus one's own life must be treated as a sort of self-conscious dream lived in anticipation of ultimate reality. The meaning of doctrine is literal; the hermeneutics of doctrine is allegorical.

More draws upon Spenserian imagery throughout the *Explanation* in order to depict enthusiasts as types of Duessa: bewitching enchantresses bearing beautiful poisoned cups. For instance, in discussing the Family of Love (to which we will turn next), More writes:

> What wonder is it therefore that those that truly hunger and thirst after Righteousness, being starved at home with those dilute and corrupt doctrines of the *Needlesness of Sanctity*, of *invincible Infirmity, slight Attrition, frivolous Penances, venal Indulgences*, crawl out abroad to seek better food, and so get into the lap and suck the nipples of this sweet Enchantress, *the lovely Family of the Love*; whose breasts do promise such strong nourishment, that they that drink thereof do not only pass from *children* to *men*, but from being *men* doe become

[265] *GM*, 153.
[266] See Brian Cummings, "Protestant Allegory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, edited by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 177-90. See also Bunyan's "Apology" for *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "Solidity indeed becomes the Pen / Of him that writeth things Divine to men; / But must I needs want solidness, because / By Metaphors I speak/ Were not God's Laws, / His Gospel-Laws, in olden time held forth / By Types, Shadows, and Metaphors?" (ll. 107-12).

Gods?[267]

The Familists are seen as occupying a bower of bliss—a belated Eden—in which the true valences of signification are reversed. They think they are gods. They think that the scripture can be just that simply appropriated—that their bodies and their experiences can be understood as the tenor of those divine vehicles. Elsewhere the misogynist element in this figurative genre—of course central to Spenser as well—comes grotesquely to the fore, as when he considers the founder of the Familists, in his reflections on modesty, to have left "very foul spots in that Glass of his, as if it had been breathed upon by the mouth of a menstruous Woman."[268] In such moments it is clear how rooted More's concerns are in the categories of purity and danger long ago explored by Mary Douglas. The enthusiastic mode of allegory, like the menstruating woman, distorts, corrupts, infects the holy object it purports to reflect.

This particular sect, the Familists or Family of Love, is without question Henry More's objective correlative for the existence of evil. Founded by Henry Nicholis, the historical Familists were possibly influenced by David Joris. Purportedly—their doctrines, for reasons of self- and official censorship, are not easily deciphered, which is itself for More evidence of their corruption—they like Joris argued that the present age should be recognized as a new dispensation of spirit replacing the dispensations of the Law and the Incarnation.[269] They thus presumptuously allegorize the Godhead, attributing each of its three parts to one phase of history: the Father to the Law, the Son to the Incarnation, and the Spirit to the present age. More objects to their over-division of the "Hypostases of the ever-blessed Trinity."[270] He insists that each dispensation comes from the whole Godhead: "Nor is the *Father* nor the *Holy Spirit* excluded in the œconomie of the *Gospel*, but their Glory is acknowledged coequal and their

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[267] *GM*, 276-77.
[268] *GM*, 254.
[269] See Alistair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Christopher Marsh, "An Introduction to the Family of Love in England," in *Religious Dissent in East Anglia*, edited by E.S. Leedham-Green (Cambriedge: Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1991), 29-36.
[270] *GM*, 257.

Majesty coeternal. Nor again can the Church ever cease to be under the *Belief* of *Jesus Christ*, so as that any other *God-service* should justle that out by its succession."[271] The more general objection behind such language is that the Familists allegorize—or as he sometimes puts it, "moralize"—religion in general.[272] They treat the Bible not as a "true *History*, but a spiritual *Romance*."[273] And what's more, they are Vladimir Nabokov's least favorite kind of reader of romance—those who think the story is all about themselves. They are poets where they should be historians, and historians where they should be poets (that is, when they should be more open to the ephemerality of the immanent world and the divinity-disclosing self which is a necessary but not sufficient condition for its appearance).

More's exploration of the psychology of the Familists' founder, Henry Nicholis, is by far the most intense of his enthusiastic inhabitations. If his inhabitation of Vaughan is finally quite sympathetic, and his inhabitation of David George is finally quite didactic, his inhabitation of Nicholis—whose name he frequently will not even commit to script, as though it carries a diabolical power to charm—feels at times like mutual possession.[274] His name is indeed rich with significance—and not just for More, but historically. Nicholis frequently signs his writings "H.N.," which he interprets as also standing for "Homo Novus," *New Man*. He is, as it were, the latest model of humanity—and a model for you, too, if you follow his teachings precisely.[275] More, of course, thinks that this new man is in fact a very old figure—a belated pagan doing Satan's ancient work. Indeed, in an interesting section of the *Grand Mystery*, More considers the philosophical basis of the comparison of enthusiasm and paganism. Just as pagans hypostasized

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[271] *GM*, 257.

[272] Enthusiasts "moralize," in his terms — that is, allegorize — the whole arc of redemption (*GM*, 266). Compare "Mahomet," who is "not so *moralized* a man" as David George and Henry Nicholis, which More does not intend as a compliment to the latter two. *GM*, 155.

[273] *GM*, 253.

[274] Even though discussion of Nicholis dominates the *Grand Mystery*, More only names him four times, once as "Henry of Amsterdam" (365) and three times as "H. N." The doppleganger effect is heightened by Henry More's signing of his (very heartfelt) preface to the *Grand Mystery* with his initials, H.M.—eerily close to the portentous initials of the "Homo Novus." *GM,* xxx.

[275] One of the most irritating dimensions of the Familists, for More, is their setting up of a priesthood in addition to charismatic authority. One cannot read the Bible oneself; one must defer in one's interpretations to the Elders of the Family of Love. More sees this as the worst hypocrisy. See *GM*, 248.

dimensions of the total divine reality and separated them from the Godhead—calling them by particular names like *Zeus*, *Aphrodite*, *Isis*, etc.—so too enthusiasts wrongly deify the individual elements of creation, whether things or themselves. This is the essence of idolatry—to worship the created part rather than the creator, the attributed rather than the actual totality.[276]

But More also feels the power of H.N.'s call to allegorize the self into the drama of creation—and not the abstract self, as some sort of Renaissance microcosm, but the actual self of lived experience. That's what makes this "witchery" so dangerous. Accordingly, his virtual witnessing of H.N. begins with a flair: "I shall first present him to you in all his ruffe and glory, adorned with the testimonies of his own style, such as he would appear to the World to be."[277] As with David George, he will show the sheep's clothing before he shows the wolf. But unlike with George, More has virtually no interest in disclosing the humoral causes beneath H.N.'s enthusiasm. He does mention that H.N. is a sanguine enthusiast—a term that operates almost as a pure synonym for "political enthusiast" at this point in his thinking.[278] But he turns quickly to H.N.'s doctrinal hermeneutics. He is much more interested in exploring—one might say, in presenting or projecting—his understanding of H.N.'s disfigured *figura* than his mechanical psychology.

For More, H.N. presents the history of prophecy as a series of events leading up to his own existence:

> *Moses* in figures and shadows set out the true being of the true sanctuary of God in the Spirit; and … to *David* and the *Prophets* was shewn the true Being in the Spirit of their sight: … *John* the *Baptist* was a Preparation by Repentance to an entrance into the *Holy* of the true Tabernacle; and … this *Holy* of the true Tabernacle is the Service of Christ in the Belief: But the *Holy of Holies*, or the

[276] See *GM*, 63-64.
[277] *GM*, 27.
[278] *GM*, 158.

Most Holy, this he reserves to himself and his *Service of the Love*.[279]

Each major figure in the Biblical narrative anticipating Jesus' Incarnation is taken, by H.N., to anticipate his own incarnation. The history of prophecy becomes, in his twisted, self-centered allegory, a history of life before his own existence. Even Christ is reduced to a prophet foretelling and foreshadowing the fulfilled covenant of the Family of Love—the *Most Holy*. More points out how readily H.N. adapts the allegorizing method to justify his carnal desires:

> And in the *Spiritual Land of peace*, That which is writ Luk. 20.35. concerning the children of the Resurrection, *that they are neither married nor given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God,* he applies to the state of *the Service of the Love*, and makes it fulfilled in his life. Which is an Allegory so cross and crooked, that nothing but an unbelief of the literal sense could ever have put a man upon the framing of it: besides that scurvy intimation it bears along with it of *community of wives*, the very same doctrine that *David George* is said to have vented.[280]

And More offers another example of H.N.'s allegorizing that seems to invite the abandonment of scripture:

> And he insinuates further in the same place, that the Seven Devils cast out of *Mary Magdalen* were those seven deadly Sins. And I am certain that the most knowing of the Family have freely professed that there are no Devils nor Witches nor Angels but those in us. Which things being supposed, it is necessary either to cast away the Scriptures, or else to allegorize them away into a mere moral or mystical sense, as these *Enthusiasts* have done.[281]

In More's view, H.N. reads the Bible not as history, but as fable. In so doing, he implicitly denies the particular importance of this book. It becomes just one of any number of possible morality

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[279] *GM*, 249.
[280] *GM*, 269.
[281] *GM*, 269.

tales. Moreover, there is a hint of antinomianism detectable in H.N.'s reading practices. The ultimate root of sin is supposed to be not in the spiritual world, but in the living self. What is to stop these "sins," then, from being interpreted in a totally selfish manner? If Mary Magdalene's demons become sins in general become one's own sins in particular—might they become, More fears, one's own inconveniences and annoyances in particular? For once this hermeneutic train has started, who can stop it? Who is to say what sin is? Why is it not interpretable as *pain to oneself*? And why is virtue or good not interpretable as *pleasure to oneself*? Where is the external standard for fixing what these stories mean?

Hence for More it is crucial to defend the reality of Mary Magdalene's demons—and indeed, as he does in a long work co-authored with Joseph Glanvill, the reality of demons and spirits in general. These are literal facts pertaining to the drama of the universe in which we play only the briefest and most fragmentary role. They are, to borrow a Neoplatonist vocabulary, real forms informing reality. To miss them is to miss the nature of signification in general—and, more practically, to be damned to hell. This is also why miracles are so important for More. They are factual proof of the divine provenance of a prophet. Prophets without miracles are prophets without divine attestation.[282] And as crucial as it is to believe in the reality of Magdalene's demons, it is far more crucial to believe in the literal crux of significance—the incarnation of Jesus. This "Substantial History"—this history of the fate of substance itself and its relation to the Word—underwrites everything else. Thus, for More, one must believe that the Historical Jesus lived, preached, performed miracles, died by crucifixion, and was resurrected, then ascended to heaven.[283] An allegory of Jesus Christ has finally no force to motivate us to be good.[284] Unless there are real consequences waiting for us in the afterlife—which becomes the repository of the literal tenor, or import, of the Gospel—one needn't heed the Christian revelation at all. To hedge

[282] *GM*, 253.
[283] *GM*, 154.
[284] *GM*, 252.

on any of the key points of doctrine is thus to court madness and damnation—which two states become, for More as for Milton, variations on the same underlying diabolical condition.

And damned madness is, for More, the predictable final destination of all of H.N.'s allegorizing. This monstrously aggrandized New Man—a self constructed in the forge of solipsism, but then revalued with a communicable positivity—commits the ultimate allegorical sin of not only reading humanity in general as the incarnated tenor of scripture, but *his own particular self*. As More writes:

> [H.N.] is therefore upon his own Hypothesis very consonant to himself, in removing the Humane person of Christ as a thing that has perished one thousand six hundred years ago, and in riveting the Godhead into his own person *sothwackingly and substantially*, as that he may give the World to understand that he was as much God as that Christ that died at *Jerusalem*, and that all those that attained to the *perfection of the Love* were so too: that he might *abundantly compensate* thereby the *loss* of *that one* that died upon the Cross, having fallen into the hands of merciless sinners. This, I say, is a consistent dream of his.[285]

And that is the arcane heart of H.N.'s doctrine, and, for More, of enthusiasm in general. Its diabolical significance cannot, for More, be overstated. Enthusiasm is hell's own hermeneutic vehicle:

> You see what a wild and exorbitant thing *this blind Enthusiasm* is, the very Vehicle of Hell that carries to *Antheisme* and *Prophaneness*, and the Triumphal Chariot of the Devil; in which questionless this begodded Mock-Prophet was hurried away, though haply he might not know it, but gloried in his shame, and prided himself in his own Captivity. The condition of whose Spirit, what it is, and whitherto it tends, if I know mine own heart, I have thus carefully discovered, out of no other

[285] *GM*, 270.

> Principle at all but that Love and Loialty I owe to my crucified Saviour and Sovereign, and out of that dear Compassion I bear to my fellow-members of his Body the Church. For verily I cannot but melt into sorrow and pitty, to consider how deceivable many well-meaning Souls are, and how captivable by the witchery of a *Fanatick* Eloquence into a strange belief, that there is a more then ordinary share of Divinity residing upon this Person, whom I am so well assured is but *Epicurus* turned *Enthusiast*, and one sunk as low beneath the light of the Gospel as any wretched *Pagan* that never heard thereof.[286]

More fears that ordinary people might be swayed by enthusiastic appeals because they aren't purified—because, in John Smith's terms, they are too prone to the imaginative rather than the intellective aspect of the soul.[287] Thus the flow of bewitching rhetoric replaces the literal water of baptism:

> For the People are already sufficiently inured to things irrational, contradictions and unintelligible, whereby the perfectest *Non-sense* must appear to them the most pure Dialect of the Spirit. And therefore there will be no stop but they *must needs be carried* on with such Torrents of Ecstatick eloquence, and be washed away from the body of the Church into this or that Fanatick Sect, according as the sutableness of their natural humour and opportunity exposes them to their assaults.[288]

Put simply, as Luther long before noticed, enthusiasm attacks human beings precisely where they are most vulnerable. It whispers to each person what each person wants so desperately to hear—*you matter*. All of this—this goodly frame the earth, this most excellent canopy the air, this brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire—it is all for *you*. This is the

[286] *GM*, 273.
[287] *GM*, 254.
[288] *GM*, 275.

appeal of the serpent to the first humans in the garden. And it is so sunk into the weakness of human nature—pride—that it has a power, for More, even to challenge the invincible divine truth—or invincible aside from this one soft point. He is in utter earnest when he writes, in the preface to the *Explanation*, "*I dare pronounce with a loud voice aforehand, That if ever* Christianity *be exterminated, it will be by* Enthusiasme. *Of so great consequence is it rightly to oppose so deadly an evil.*"[289]

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8. Conclusions

Henry More's counter-enthusiasm—and that of the Cambridge Platonists in general—certainly makes recourse to the materialist perspectives, particularly those of Epicurus and Galen, in accounting for the physiological causality of the enthusiastic soul. And this dimension of their philosophical polemic is highly influential. But it should be understood as part of a broader vision fundamentally rooted in theological hermeneutics. Any adaptation of materialist tools is projective and provisional. The enthusiast might be analyzed using Epicurean notions because he is himself an Epicurean monstrosity. A counter-enthusiast might turn Epicurus against "*Epicurus* turned *Enthusiast.*"[290] But this is not the only strategy one can adapt in explaining away the enthusiast. Indeed, at times it seems to More that it doesn't matter whether one interprets the enthusiast as humorally disordered, or diabolically possessed, or "atheistical" (that is, a rogue and a cheat).[291] All three explanations are at bottom interchangeable. Atheists—that is, genuine epicures—are, consciously or unconsciously, pledged to Satan. Melancholics—that is, practical epicures—are, generally unconsciously, likewise. And why shouldn't Satan himself get in on the fun from time to time, providing a "worser Assistence … then mere Complexion" to the enthusiastic hermeneut?[292] In short, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the problem of enthusiasm can be approached at a number of interlocked and set levels of analysis. One might focus on the

[289] *GM*, vi.
[290] *GM*, 273.
[291] *GM*, 264.
[292] *GM*, 251.

enthusiast's material brain, or nefarious motives, or cosmic demonic assistance. All three are happening at once—in a dark intermodal swirl. To return to the terms introduced in Chapter One, in the figuration of the enthusiast, intermodality and rationalization show themselves to be dialectically linked. In concluding this chapter, it is important to describe what I mean by this.

What matters more than the particular causal explanation offered for enthusiasm is the act of virtual witnessing or virtual displaying of the enthusiast incarnate. The various philosophical vocabularies we've looked at—Lucretian, Aristotelian, Platonic—are marshaled to the more basic task of bringing the enthusiast to life vividly in the pious imagination of the reader. They are provisional totalities available not for the analysis of actual enthusiasts, but for the fleshing out of virtual ones—that is, for the positing of psychological depths and humoral clockworks beneath the woodcut faces of the absent monstrosities on whose shoulders the political chaos of England and Christianity has been heaped. The enthusiast thus *is* a virtual embodiment—and a conceptual means of thinking about and adjusting the mimetic qualities of imaginary embodiment in general. This comes across very clearly in More. Following his lengthy rehearsal of H.N., for example, he asks the reader directly, "What think you of this hideous Monster that I have so lively set before your eyes?"[293] There is a real panache in such a sentence. He appeals to the reader's imagination—and confines the enthusiast to that same imagination. That is where the enthusiast belongs, stuck in the mimetic rebounding of sensuality and imagination, never able to escape into the intellect. He is bottled up in a mere slice of the experience over which he claims such totalitarian sway. One can see in such a moment how indebted Edgar Allen Poe is to Henry More's example—and how Henry More is something like an Edgar Allen Poe in earnest, who—and such adjustments to collective poesis could only have been done in earnest—tweaks the virtual presentation of reality in response to the problem of

[293] *GM*, 274.

unlicensed prophetic authority, at once bringing new life to the presentation of subjectivity and distorting, objectifying, and limiting that subjectivity.[294]

More has, in short, a penchant for bringing enthusists to bodily life in some ways—as closed selves—in order to close them off in others—as communicative selves. For instance, consider the moment when he is railing against the tendency in H.N. and other radical Protestants to lard their (in his view) anti-Christian sermons with quotations from scripture:

> Again, When I consider the ineptness of your Allegations out of Scripture for such Opinions as you are so zealous for, and the solemn adorning of the margins of your Theological Treatises with such insignificant citations out of the undeniable Oracles of God, as that when one examines them he shall find his understanding as much abused as a mans eye-sight is by that mockery of drawing ones hands one from the other, and twisting with his thumbs and forefingers as if there were some subtil string betwixt; (For assuredly the connexion betwixt your Quotations and your Conclusions is utterly as invisible as that imaginary line to the eyes of the sleepy).[295]

More thus compares the relation of scriptural marginalia to the body of text in enthusiastic writing to the fluttering of two hands linked "by subtil strings" only in the imagination—as though the enthusiastic book is a sort of ham prestidigitator at a children's birthday party. It's a fantastic image. And it does real polemical work—substituting mentally the fingers and hands of the enthusiast for the text. The ultimate enthusiastic heresy—reading outward from one's own incarnation—is thus projected ironically onto the figuration of the enthusiast. Just as he uses the Epicurean gaze against Epicures, so More uses techniques of rhetorical incarnation against the falsely allegorizing incarnators. Put more practically, More represents the enthusiast in a way that

[294] The connection with Poe is especially evident in "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether."
[295] *GM*, 275.

gives them embodied experience—but not *your* embodied experience. He reveals their tricks. They can think they can communicate. But they can't communicate.

And so the enthusiast is a means of figuring the rationalized distinction of selves from selves, and of logics within any given self. The enthusiast is a frightful figuration of epistemological disorder. But he is also the occasion, for More and the other Cambridge Platonists, to articulate a more positive notion of inspiration—one grounded, as my preceding section emphasized, not in one's own confused incarnation, but in the incarnation of God's Word. More's *Explanation* is filled with expressions of this contrast—of the way in which the enthusiast offers a *felix culpa* against which to posit a good allegoricity, a good imaginativeness, a good intermodality. For instance, More writes:

> For God is not in these fanatick *Herricanoes*, no more then he was in the tempestuous Wind, Earthquake, or Fire that passed before the Prophet *Elias*. But the *Divine Truth* is to be found in that still small voice, which is the *Echo* of the *Eternal World*; not urg'd upon us by that furious Impulse of complexionall Imagination, but descending from the Father of lights, with whom there is no shadow of change.[296]

A bit later, More declares that he is looking for the still, small voice of "*Incomplexionate Reason*" within which his own being is a participant.[297] This is the dimension of More's thinking that current advocates for a Cambridge Platonist revival take to heart—his assurance that there is a simple core of reason available to the sufficiently purified and meditative soul. As More exhorts his readers:

> And therefore I beseech every man in these daies of Liberty to take heed how they turn in thither, especially those that are of an *Enthusiastick* temper, such as are most of the honester and better-meaning *Quakers*. For if in their bewildred

[296] *GM*, 254.
[297] *GM*, 254.

> wandrings they take up their Inne here, let them look to it that they be not robbed of all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and be stripped into naked Infidelity and Paganisme, and (which is worst of all) be so intoxicated with the cup of this Inchantress, as to think this injury their gain, and to prefer false Liberty before their Christian Simplicity, and those gaudy and phantastick Titles of being *Deified* and *begodded* before the real possession of Christian Truth and Godliness.[298]

This Truth and Godliness is intermodal—indeed, is Trinitarian. But it is also unified. It is rooted on earth in the Incarnation—"the ancient and Apostolick Faith according to the *Historical* meaning thereof"—and anticipates the Second Coming—"the Offices of Christ are never to be antiquated till his visible return to Judgement according to the *literal* sense of the Creed."[299] During the present age, it must struggle with enthusiasm over the basic structure of signification. It is locked in a war of allegories—where the one deposits the essence of language in an originary telos exceeding subjective experience, and the other reads the world as an allegory of the self as really lived. The following chapter's discussion of Locke will develop these links between the discourse of enthusiasm and the theoretical structure of language.

[298] *GM*, 533.
[299] *GM*, 533.

4. THE ARBITRARY WORD: LOCKE READS PAUL

> And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.
> (Genesis 2.19)

In 1656, when John Locke was 24 years old, the Quaker James Nayler and "his Proselytes" were brought before Parliament on charges of blasphemy and treason for imitating the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem—with Nayler playing the role of the Son of God, and his mostly female companions embodying the cohort of women announcing his entrance into the city.[300] Locke did not simply witness Nayler's examination, he produced an account in a letter to his father reflecting a profound fascination with Nayler and his followers—and in particular with what he sees as their peculiar and troubling relation to language and meaning.

For example, when the Parliamentary Committee asks Nayler why he has assumed the identity of Christ, Locke carefully records Nayler's "evasion": "That Christ being the same today and forever, what honour was given to him at Jerusalem might be given to him where and in whomsoever he is manifested from God."[301] Nayler claims, to Locke's horror, to be a prophetic participant in the eternal spirit of Jesus—to be, as it were, a living type of Christ, an embodiment of the Word. Jesus is not, in other words, a man. Rather, he is a force—the Word—available in full to those who can pick up its signal.

Following the Committee's initial questioning, Nayler and his followers—"one man more and three or four women of the tribe"—were ordered to a small room adjacent to the main chamber. Locke followed them there, where his observations of the Quaker's strange linguistic "carriage" continue:

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[300] Locke to John Locke, senior, [15 November 1656], in E.S. de Beer, editor, *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976-89), letter 30, vol. 1, p. 44.
[301] Ibid.

> One of the women made a continued humming noise longer than the reach of an ordinary breath, without motion either of lips or breath that I who stood next to her could perceive. She ceasing, another sung, 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' with the addition of some other words. Then the other (her song being done) gave some of their ordinary exhortation, with their common mixture of judgment and threatening. And after a little pause, they went over the same round, without answering any of the questions which by the standers by were proposed, and those which by the Committee were urged. I observed they either not answered or did it with a great deal of subtlety, besides the cover and cunning of that language which others and I believe they themselves scarce understand.[302]

These Quakers, Locke is at pains to emphasize, are not responsible users of language. Whereas bystanders and Parliamentary committee-men pose reasonable questions in expectation of reasonable answers (and one can imagine the degree to which Locke overlooks or downplays the inevitably coercive atmosphere of the interrogation in his characterization of this exchange) the Quakers offer a range of numinous utterances: almost supernaturally drawn-out humming, meditative intonations of the psalms, bursts of prophetic doomsaying and haranguing, spools of half-conscious language which can be, for Locke, paradoxically both "cunning" and unencumbered by the understanding. Like Nayler, these Quaker women seem to participate in a present flow of ineffable meaning—to claim the authority not of words, but of something beneath words, subtending the ordinary acts of naming and responding.

Our discussion of Henry More in some ways helps prepare for Locke's reaction. Locke, like More, distrusts these Quakers because of how they are using language. But these two thinkers take very different approaches to this issue. They disagree on why Quaker speech—and, to put it more generally, the approach to significance exhibited by those claiming unlicensed

[302] Ibid.

spiritual authority—is erroneous. As we've seen, More claims to have found the root of the problem of enthusiastic signification in a latent allegory of the self which refers all meaning not to its religious source—the Incarnation of Jesus—but to the "New Man" whom a given enthusiast happens to be. For Locke, the issue is at once much simpler and much deeper: they are not using language *reasonably*. Although he is certainly influenced by More's thinking—and more directly influenced by the thinking of his Cambridge Platonist colleague Ralph Cudworth via his daughter Lady Damaris Masham, one of Locke's closest friends from 1681 until the end of his life—and is particularly concerned with the problem of enthusiasm identified and articulated by More's generation, Locke does not share More's diffuse, speculative, allegorical approach to this issue.[303] Locke's exposure to enthusiasm does not lead him to construct or endorse a typological theory of meaning that refuses overweening claims to prophetic experience; it leads him to ask and to answer the more basic questions, "What are words? What are reasons? What is knowledge?"

Locke's correspondence with Lady Masham on the issue of enthusiasm helps clarify the way in which he departs from the Cambridge Platonists while extending some of their key conclusions. Soon after Locke met Masham they began exchanging letters, in particular regarding John Smith's *Selected Discourses*, parts of which we considered in the last chapter. Smith proposes in one of his discourses that the highest form of knowledge belongs to that person "who running and shooting up above his own *Logical* or *Self-rational* life, pierceth into the*Highest life:* Such a one, who by *Universal Love* and *Holy affection* abstracting himself from himselfe, endeavours the nearest Union with the Divine Essence that may be […] as *Plotinus* speaks; knitting his owne centre, if he have any, unto the centre of Divine Being."[304] Although she could not share Smith's Plotinian convictions, Masham, in a letter to Locke, claimed that it is possible to feel that something like this ideal, deiform knowledge that exceeds logic and reason. Locke would have none of this. He

[303] For Locke and Masham, see Roger Woolhouse, *Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 174-77.
[304] Smith, 20.

denied that there can be any knowledge above reason. Any claims to knowledge above reason—including Smith's—must be understood as "enthusiasm," a term which Locke carefully defines in his reply to Masham: "[By] enthusiasm [I mean] a strong and firm persuasion of any proposition relating to religion for which a man has either no or not sufficient proofs from reason but receives them as truths wrought in the mind extraordinarily by god himself and influences coming immediately from him." For Locke, such a conviction "can be no evidence or ground of assurance at all nor can by any means be taken for knowledge."[305]

Thus it is evident that Locke is centrally concerned with the problem of enthusiasm—not only in his 1681 correspondence with Masham, but from a very early age, as evidenced by his fascinated reporting on the interrogation of Nayler and his followers. Indeed, I will argue in this chapter that his revolutionary theory of language in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is centered on this problem. It recognizes claims to extraordinary inspiration to be dependent on (in his view) an inadequate theory of language—the Adamic theory, which (as I will discuss at length) claims a fundamental correspondence between words and things grounded in Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis 2.19. Further, as I will show, Locke extends this counter-enthusiastic theory of language to the heart of unlicensed authority—the Bible—and produces both a Biblical hermeneutics and a reading of the Epistles of Paul that complement his theory of signification. But at the same time that he extends the concern with enthusiasm so central to the Cambridge Platonists, he radically reorients his approach to this issue.

As we saw, the Cambridge Platonists identify the enthusiast in order to preserve for themselves a form of inspiration. They delimit bad spirituality and false prophecy in order to protect their own good spirituality and true prophecy. They cast the enthusiast as a creature mimetically limited to matter and the imagination, reflecting only his base embodiment. In contrast, they cast themselves as participating mimetically in the larger cosmic arc of Incarnation

[305] See de Beer, letters 687 and 696. Quoted in Woolhouse, 176-77.

and deiformity. They are able to transcend the imagination and attain to the intellect—to "Union with the Divine Essence," as Smith puts it. They entertain materialist provisional totalities, but only insofar as these clarify the larger spiritual being in which they take themselves to participate. That, then, is the Cambridge Platonist approach to enthusiasm—to delimit it and transcend it.

Locke's approach totally abandons the idea that one might participate in a true inspiration or a pure communication with the divine essence that avoids the structures of signification and knowledge common to all human experience. Those who claim to be able to do this are no better than enthusiasts themselves. Locke thus transposes the discourse of enthusiasm from a tenor in which significance and knowledge are imagined to work according to different "levels," to a tenor in which significance and knowledge are rationally interrogated as such.[306] He wants to know what they are *at all*. While his investigation is similarly motivated by concerns regarding unlicensed political and spiritual power, these questions drive him to delineate the structure of all inquiry. Moreover, this effort produces, as I will suggest, a more precise and logically sound rationalization schema than that seen in the Cambridge Platonists. In Locke, one can see the basic distinction between self, society, and nature much more clearly than in the Cambridge Platonists. Where their counter-enthusiastic rationalization might be seen as an assemblage of limited totalities or provisional philosophical lenses which roughly reflect concerns with objectivity, subjectivity, and sociality arranged around a theological core, Locke's rationalization schema divides experience according to more logically consistent principles—albeit principles still organized around the concept of God and the conviction of the truth of Christianity—and produces a stronger differentiation of natural things from private things from public things. Locke's God, meanwhile, is not in any way super-rational or extra-logical. For Locke, God is—as

[306] This refusal of a "leveled" counter-enthusiasm is perhaps of a piece with Locke's skepticism regarding the value of Aristotelian approaches to philosophical issues. As I suggested in the last chapter, the idea that prophetic experience can be broken down into different levels is derived ultimately from Aristotle's *De Anima*, with its distinctions between types of soul. The enthusiast's imagination is figured as trapped between the vegetative and animal levels of the soul. The contemplative soul—that is, the Cambridge Platonist soul—is able to reach to the level of intellect. Locke totally refuses this paradigm, insisting instead on the more basic questions of what signification, experience, and knowledge can be understood to be at all.

the second half of this chapter will emphasize—absolutely committed and beholden to reason and consistent logic, *especially* in matters of revelation.

In forming this argument, I draw upon a number of venerable historical perspectives—particularly the work of Hans Aarsleff, which first proposed the centrality of "the Adamic word" for Locke's theory of language, and John Marshall, who meticulously situates Locke's thinking on religion within the roiling anti-sectarian context of seventeenth-century England.[307] But I also challenge some of the abiding assumptions of Locke scholarship, which often prefers to treat Locke, especially in his language theory, as though he is participating in a purely academic debate regarding the true nature of language—as, in short, an anti-Scholastic thinker, frustrated by the sloppy foundations of the degenerated Aristotelian language philosophy of his time, rather than an Adamic innovator, concerned with the political consequences of a surging prophetic culture laying claim to power by way of the Word.[308] As I've suggested already, any distinction between philosophy and politics is not easily made in the later seventeenth-century: sectarian arguments rolled inevitably into philosophical arguments in Locke's century, and many philosophers were driven to embrace radical and innovative philosophical positions precisely because they provided ammunition in the war of ideas stemming from the mid-century crisis of religious authority. Moreover, as the research of Nicholas McDonnell has suggested, those who advocated sectarian positions often did so from more learned positions than has sometimes been assumed—not advocating an "illiterate" approach to the question of the Word, but translating into popular

[307] Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[308] For the view that Locke is in fact an Aristotelian language philosopher opposing the sloppier Aristotelianism of others, see Paul Guyer, "Locke's Philosophy of Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, edited by Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 116, 118.

terms the philosophical and theological positions they had inherited from their own religious training at Oxford and Cambridge.[309]

The first two parts of this chapter, then, revisit the relation of Lockean language philosophy and the Adamic Word with an emphasis—missing in Aarsleff's classic account—upon the relevance of this debate for the broader problem of popular spiritual authority. I argue in these sections that Locke does not discard the Adamic Word, as Aarsleff has claimed; rather, he trivializes it, universalizes it, and deflates it. The distinction is important for the politics of language. When Nayler is Adam—or, as More's counter-enthusiasm leads one to fear, the Second Adam (or perhaps the Third, after Christ)—there is a problem for an authority that has predicated its legitimacy on an exclusive claim to the inheritance of the fundamental right to organize the naming and thus the shaping of creation. But when each language user is an Adam, this problem loses its bite. Locke understands this explicitly in his writings on the nature of language in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and his solution to this problem—the theory of the arbitrary word—provides the ensuing century with philosophical grounds for denying the intelligibility of sectarian claims to divine authority, even (indeed especially) when these claims are articulated in the cadences reserved for church and state. In so doing, Locke participates centrally in the process I have been calling the rationalization of the word—the refusal of the intermodal character of the divine Word in favor of a trifurcation of language into linked but independent objective, subjective, and social dimensions.

But this is not Locke's only contribution to the discourse of enthusiasm. Like all counter-enthusiasts, his critique of enthusiasm is paired with a need to reclaim—in adjusted form—enthusiastic authority. In the third part of my chapter, then, I take a close look at Locke's reading of St. Paul, connecting his philological efforts in that work, his last to be published (and among those he counted as his most important), both to the context of enthusiastic invocations of

[309] See Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2003).

Pauline theology, and to his theory of arbitrary signification.[310] Locke too, I will claim, inhabits the enthusiast—but in a form meticulously disambiguated and rededicated to a notion of the word governed by the principle of non-contradiction. He imagines an enthusiast, in short, who is as responsive and responsible as he is himself to the submerged logical structure of language. Thus he refuses Smith's participation in divine essences that exceed reason—but finally endorses a participation in the divine as fundamentally rational and logical. Reason and logic are themselves revealed, in Locke, to be divine properties in which all humans participate—if not through immediate inspiration, still, in a sense, prophetically.

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1. Locke's Vox Populi

During his 1663-64 appointment as Censor of Moral Philosophy at Christ Church, Oxford, roughly seven years after he had witnessed the interrogation of James Nayler and his Quaker entourage, John Locke delivered eight lectures later published under the title, *Essays on the Law of Nature*. The essays were delivered in Latin and remained unpublished during his lifetime. Nevertheless, as Mark Goldie observes, they exerted considerable influence in his intellectual circle.[311] Moreover, and importantly for the argument of the present chapter, they demonstrate the extent to which his philosophical thinking was rooted in the theological-political assumptions and anxieties of the Restoration. In particular, these lectures reflect an interest in simultaneously defending and critiquing the notion of natural law—that is, in the common use of the term at the time stemming from the thought of Aquinas, Grotius, Suarez, and others, the idea that the divine being and our duties *vis-a-vis* that being are decipherable by reason from the evidence of nature.[312] The simultaneity of defense and critique in Locke's treatment reflects the political-theological imperative we have already seen as so central to revolutionary and post-revolutionary England—

[310] For Locke's sense of the importance of his *Paraphrase* of Paul, see Roger Woolhouse, *Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 452-53.
[311] Mark Goldie, ed., *Locke: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 79.
[312] Ibid.

to defend a magisterial prophetic relation to God while discrediting those (such as, most outrageously, Nayler) who would reroute the divine spirit so as to bypass the hierarchical monopoly on revelation and claim participation in the spirit for themselves and people like them. Locke sees a defense of natural law, and hence a defense of a form of collective divination such that human beings can deduce God's will from natural and moral evidence, as essential to the order of the world. At the same time, he wishes to refine the idea of natural law such that certain forms of reason don't count as evidence of the divine will—in particular, such that the evidence of widespread agreement among language users is not taken to count as natural evidence of God's plan for worldly power. Natural law, in short, must be conceptualized independently of the people's voice—as it was known in Latin, the *vox populi*.

This concern is clearest at the beginning of the fifth essay—on the question of whether natural law might be discovered in "the general consent of men"—where we read the following:

> 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.' Surely, we have been taught by a most unhappy lesson how doubtful, how fallacious this maxim is, how productive of evils, and with how much party spirit and with what cruel intent this ill-omened proverb has been flung wide [lately] among the common people. Indeed, if we should listen to this voice as if it were the herald of a divine law, we should hardly believe that there was any God at all. For is there anything so abominable, so wicked, so contrary to all right and law, which the general consent, or rather the conspiracy, of a senseless crowd would not at some time advocate? Hence we have heard of the plunder of divine temples, the obstinacy of insolence and immorality, the violation of laws, and the overthrow of kingdoms. And surely, if this voice were the voice of God, it would be exactly the opposite of that first fiat whereby He created and furnished this world, bringing order out of chaos; nor does God ever speak to men in such a way—unless He should wish to throw everything into confusion again and to reduce it to a state of chaos.

> In vain, therefore, should we seek the dictates of reason and the decrees of nature in the general consent of men.[313]

One might hear in this passage a conventional denunciation of "our late troubles," typical of any given Oxford lecturer of the 1660s, and argue that this has little bearing on the larger philosophical question of natural law. But the urgent stakes of Locke's rhetoric here ought to discourage stopping further inquiry with such a view—or, better, ought to suggest that such views are all the more to the extent that they might have counted as commonsensical. As Locke puts it, the *vox populi* is not an instrument of the divine nature, unless by this instrument (as at Babel) God wishes to foment chaos in his creation. At least at this stage in his philosophical career, Locke grounds natural law not, despite his reputation in High School Civics courses, in "the consent of the governed," but in evidence free from the pitfalls and vicissitudes proper to the minds and languages of human beings.

He does so, I want to suggest, as a result of his concern with the freedom of Logos associated at the time with those called enthusiasts. Unlike Hugo Grotius, who grounds his account of natural law and hence his account of the legitimate power of the state in "collective agreement," and unlike John Milton, who in *Areopagitica* and elsewhere celebrates the apparent chaos of the budding public sphere as evidence of the spreading spirit of prophecy, and who welcomes the rise of "a Nation of Prophets," Locke seeks to conceptualize natural law independently of human discourse precisely because, as he sees it, the confusion of the two led to civil war and tyranny.[314] Consent—voice—cannot be trusted with the divine prophetic burden, at least not as philosophically formulated in the mid-17th century. If God speaks, he does so in a language utterly different from those languages used by his image-bearers, not, anyway, in the

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[313] John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature and Associated Writings*, ed. W. von Leyden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 161.

[314] "Just as every right [*ius*] of the magistrate comes to him from the state, so has the same right come to the state from private individuals; and similarly, the power of the state is the result of collective agreement." See Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, Book 1, chapter 8, edited and with an introduction by Richard Tuck (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005); Milton, *Areopagitica*, 554.

murmurs and shouts of James Nayler and his followers—or those of any other self-authorized group of like-minded human beings.

As is well known, despite his repeated insistence upon the centrality of moral questions for any philosophical system, Locke never produced a positive moral theory.[315] He maintains throughout his career a commitment to natural law, to the idea that reason can discern the divine will, even as he cultivates (looking, as many philosophers and historians of ideas do, from Hume backward) a radical empiricism that necessarily undermines any such commitment. My purpose is not to reopen the question, ably handled elsewhere, of what Locke's moral system might have been, or how it might have reconciled these apparently competing vectors. Rather, I would like to suggest that both approaches might be organized around a single—albeit complicated—problem: what I have called the problem of popular prophetic authority.

More precisely, Locke's fixation on the problem of enthusiasm—or, more accurately, the problem behind the problem of enthusiasm, the late-Reformation crises of legitimation—leads him to one of the most innovative turns in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: the emphasis on the unreliability of language and the arbitrary nature of signification. With this emphasis, Locke finds the root of popular prophetic authority—and he strikes at it. He recognizes that sectarian claims to authority rely for their coherence, for their mysterious power, on an understanding of language inherited from centuries of feudal arguments defending sovereign monopolies on revelation—that human language, and particularly the language of the prophets, provides a bridge between the divine and human orders, between the Cities of God and Man, in

[315] Many Locke scholars, including von Leyden and Richard I. Aaron, consider Locke to have been committed to natural law in his younger years, and to have decided on a hedonistic morality consistent with empiricism in his later years. See von Leyden's introduction to the *Natural Law* lectures, p. 14. See also Aaron, *John Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 257. Others, including John Colman and Stephen Darwall, point out that Locke does not seem to have felt any tension at all between natural law and empiricism. See John Colman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 49; Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal Ought: 1640–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37. Though Locke's moral philosophy is tangential to the issues under discussion here, I would align my reading with this latter camp. I am indebted to the illuminating discussion of this controversy in the online Stanford Enclyclopedia of Philosophy. See Patricia Sheridan, "Locke's Moral Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition).

Augustine's terms. Locke's approach to language undermines this relation. In effect, although this is almost surely not Locke's actual purpose, it trivializes this relation—following the argument of so-called enthusiasts, that the divine spirit is already here among us, to the point where this claim loses its radical force, becoming so ordinary that it becomes, by the same turn, meaningless.

Given that Locke's approach to the problem of enthusiasm engages with the basic source of this problem—the relation of language to God's creation (the natural world), to God's favorite creatures (human beings), and to those creatures' ability to understand one another and communicate their inner experiences—it is worth reviewing the existing suppositions regarding the relations of humanity, divinity, and language that he inherits. The notion that language is a special invention of the gods gifted to human beings is, of course, extremely ancient. In the major monotheistic religions, the linguistic link between humans and God is still more precise—and perhaps still more important. In Eden, God's creation of Adam—by breathing into clay, itself a prophetic transmission from God's "mouth"—is quickly followed up with Adam's naming of the animals in Gen 2.19, a sign that Adam is a steward of creation who acts, in naming its parts, as a sort of sub-creator. If God's words create, Adam's words reflect this creation, making it comprehensible and bringing its infinite parts into conceptual focus. The word, as much as the human form itself, is thus the reflective surface of the divine image—the means by which humanity is like the divine, and is connected to the divine. The sequence of prophetic vessels who (according to scriptural tradition) literally clarify and codify God's nature and laws for the Judaic, Christian, and Muslim confessions further establish the role of language as an aperture linking finitude and eternity. In the Bible, as I suggested in the introduction to this project, divine knowledge is transmitted though speech. The prophet is called. The prophet listens. The prophet speaks. The divine is not perceived—except by Moses—face-to-face. But it is heard, and it is channeled in speech.

As James Bono has shown in *The Word of God and the Languages of Man*, the *fact* of the linguistic connection between God and humanity was not disputed in dominant late antique, medieval, and early modern theorizations of language.[316] The *shape* of this connection, however, was disputed. Although he does not emphasize the theological context and its relation to post-Reformation politics—a context which is obviously central to this study of Locke and to this project in general—Bono's work shows that most language theorists of the time approached the problem of redefining the divine-human relation by appealing to the originary scene of prophetic contact as represented by the figure of Adam in the Garden of Eden, naming the animals. These reconceptions of signification took the form of a variety of "Adamic" theories of language.[317] It is important to emphasize that these Adamic theories did not agree with one another. There was not one reading of the Edenic origin of language. There were many. The scene of Adamic contact might be seen, in this way, as a battleground in a rhetorical-conceptual struggle for representation. Joanna Picciotto's *States of Innocence*, a work perhaps more familiar to literary scholars than Bono's, similarly demonstrates the ubiquity of Adamic theories and Adamic impersonations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—even (or especially) among those natural philosophers and virtuosi whom a later historical tradition would claim for the rise of secular modernity.[318] Such impersonations, Picciotto suggests, are the condition for the reconceptualization of objectivity in terms of the eye of the innocent laboring in a Garden that has only apparently melted into a prelapsarian past—which is, in reality, still here. But what Picciotto's recovery of the ubiquity of Adamic impersonations does not emphasize is the degree to which the political force of Adamic appropriations varied greatly depending on the state and

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[316] James Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man: Interpreting Nature in Early Modern Science and Medicine, Vol. 1: From Ficino to Descartes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). According to email correspondence with the author, a second volume of this work is soon forthcoming.
[317] Bono's positions on the Adamic word are helpfully summarized in James Bono, "The Two Books and Adamic Knowledge: Reading the Book of Nature and Early Modern Strategies for Repairing the Effects of the Fall and of Babel," in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions*, ed. Jitze van der Meer and Schott Mandelbrott (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 299-339. On p. 312 Bono breaks down the approaches to Adamism into a helpful chart.
[318] Picciotto, passim.

condition of the appropriator. When Gerrard Winstanley, for instance, prophetically declares his right to common land on the basis of the common Adamic inheritance of all men (and perhaps women too), this falls with a very different force than when Joseph Addison assumes the prelapsarian gaze of the Spectator in order to comment on the manners and mores of a burgeoning preindustrial London.

Adam, then, is a figure in a struggle for representation. He is occupied by many perspectives, to many competing ends. He is, as the first human vehicle of prophecy, an especially valuable figure in this struggle—but one playing a role within a larger cultural narrative regarding the nature of prophetic authority. In this light, Locke's theory of language—famously described by Hans Aarsleff as articulated against Adamic theories of language—assumes a perspective at once literally radical (centered on the root of this question of authority) and ultimately preservative of the spiritual distinction between the state and the individual.[319] As I will show, Locke gives us an especially original version of the Adamic word—one so original that it is frequently mistaken for a total rejection of the theory. Rather than argue, as did the earlier figures in the debates over the Adamic word, for a particular conceptual arrangement of divine and human forms of signification, Locke identifies, accepts, and trivializes the basic claim of the so-called enthusiasts he seeks to undermine. He articulates a theory of the Adamic word such that every speaker is always, in a sense, *being Adam-like*—naming the world as though for the first time. At the same time, he proliferates this prophetic capacity to call the world into a reflective relationship to the divine to such an extent that it becomes meaninglessly trivial. This is the polemical basis of what Aarsleff has called his pioneering approach to the word as arbitrary signifier.[320] It is arbitrary precisely in the double-sense of the term—at once judge-like in its authority, and vanishingly petty and frivolous. Thus, contrary to Aarsleff, Locke does not reject the Adamic word. Rather, he pursues it to an unexpected logical conclusion—the result of which

[319] Aarsleff, 25.
[320] Aarsleff, 25.

is the dominant account of linguistic signification not only for the centuries immediately following *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding* but for ours as well.

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2. *Locke's New Adamism*

Hence the Adamic theory of language is crucial for understanding the force of popular prophetic authority in the seventeenth century. Those claiming popular spiritual authority were able to draw such power in part by appealing to the prelapsarian relation of God and Adam in Eden, and claiming that present times were witnessing a return to that Edenic relation –a return to clear and plain communication between God and humans. Thus the Leveller John Lilburne writes: "[W]hen God gives his law unto the sonnes of men, he doth it plainly, without *ambiguous termes*, and in their owne *language*, as first for *Adam*."[321] And James Nayler, whom we've already met, writes, "Man was not created in sin, but pure and holy, in the Image of God, by which he was able to see into the wonders of God, and to give Names unto all Creatures."[322] As we've seen, this was not the only such source of spiritual authority. But, for Locke, it was crucial, because it addressed the basic question of what a word is at all. Unlicensed prophets accrued their power through words bearing mysterious truths; Locke sought to call into question the idea that words have any such special or essential power in themselves, and thus to pull the plug, as it were, on this form of spiritual authority.

But what, exactly, was this Adamic theory of language? Aarsleff's summary remains helpful:

> [It] held that languages even now, in spite of their multiplicity and seeming chaos, contain elements of the original perfect language created by Adam when he named the animals in his prelapsarian state. [...] Still retaining the divine nature of their common origin, languages were in fundamental accord with nature, indeed they were themselves

[321] James Lillburne, *The iust mans iustification: or A letter by way of plea in barre* (1646), 12. *EEBO*.
[322] James Nayler, *Sinne kept out of the kingdome* (1653), 1. *EEBO*.

> part of creation and nature. They were divine and natural, not human and conventional. [...] The authority of scriptural revelation ensured that languages held a nomenclature, that words did name species and essences.[323]

Locke's discussion of language in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* centers on the question of whether words name species and essences—whether, in other words, words correspond to real natural things in the world.[324] Locke finds that some do, those known as simple ideas. The word "triangle," for instance, corresponds essentially to the geometrical figure. He finds that most words, however, either do not correspond to actual natural essences—which is the case with all named substances, such as (Locke's omnipresent example) "gold," simply because human beings are not conversant enough with the basic properties of a given named substance—or correspond to what Locke calls "nominal essences," because these words do not name things in the world but rather complex ideas (or, Locke's preferred term, "mixed modes") built through convention and "voluntary association" of a variety of simpler ideas. Examples of such words to which Locke returns include "parricide," "justice," "gratitude," and "adultery."[325] For Locke, the distinction between these sorts of words, those that name substances and those that name mixed modes, is, at bottom, tied to the different relations humans have toward the rest of creation. It follows from the "maker's knowledge" tradition then in circulation via Bacon's philosophy—and which would, in the century to come, prove so fundamental to the thinking of Giambattista Vico.[326] Humans cannot properly "name" substances because humans did not make substances. Humans don't know what they are finally, basically made of. Only God, the Creator, has such knowledge. Humans can only, then, refer to substantial things conventionally, in a limited way, ever improving their definitions as they come closer in experience and experiment to

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[323] Aarsleff, 25.
[324] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 500.
[325] *Essay*, 403.
[326] See Antonio Perez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon's Idea of Science and the Maker's Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. Dave Marsh (New York: Penguin, 2000), 120 ff.

things themselves but never finally exhausting the fine physical details from which the properties of things emerge. On the other hand, humans can inquire with perfect confidence into concepts of their own making—or, as Locke puts it repeatedly, words created in "the workmanship of the understanding." Because such words are only signs for ideas, one can infer the combination of ideas forming each mixed mode—or, at the very least, one can ask those who use the word how they themselves define it (and here one sees Locke restoring, in a way that wholly avoids the question of Platonic forms, the method of Socratic inquiry) and thus come to a clearer understanding of the term. A word like "justice," for instance, which combines the simpler ideas of obedience, law, and punishment—each of which might also be broken down into their component conceptual simples—might be understood and defined by human inquiry. For Locke, it is humanity's creation, not God's, and so can be known to those that made it.

One upshot of Locke's discussion, of course, is to observe that there is no such thing as (say) justice in itself, independent of human definition. Justice is a definite word with a stable nominal essence. Whereas the Adamic—or, better, a prior version of the Adamic—theory of language would posit that all words, whether they name things or ideas, are defined in the mind of God (which is to say, in Leibniz's terms, the infinite domain of all possible existing concepts, mental or physical), and brought by divine gift into the languages of man by Adam, only to have degenerated after the fall, Locke proposes a distinction of type between words that name things and words that name ideas. The basic building blocks of things are made by the workmanship of the divine; complex ideas by the workmanship of the human.

This is not, as I have suggested, a total repudiation of the Adamic theory. It is quite explicitly a theory of language articulated within the Adamic discourse. But it exhibits a new attitude toward that discourse, treating Adamic coinage not as a special gift indicating a special discernment of divine reality, but as an ordinary fact in the history of all complex words. This undermines those who would claim any special insight into any special term—say, holiness, or sin,

or justice—and stake political authority on that purported ability to see into the essence of an idea. To put it in our key terms, he undermines one of the main rhetorical tools of the political enthusiast—the claim to special knowledge of key theological concepts.

One can feel Locke's need to address the threat of the political enthusiast in his connection of the Adamic word to the history of civil society as well. In a long passage toward the end of his discussion of substances, Locke proposes to explain his theory of language by appealing (as he does elsewhere, and as the early modern philosophers often do) to an imagined version of the state of nature. He reimagines Adam not (cheekily) in Eden, but as a sort of governor sorting out the original problems of civil society. One of his subjects, Lamech, is unhappy because he suspects that his wife, Adah, has committed adultery. Observing both Lamech's state of suspicion and the notion that Adah has been unfaithful, Adam coins two new words—Kinneah and Niouph, the one indicating suspicion in a husband, the other disloyalty in a wife. Locke insists that Adam, from the crucible of the problems of civil society, has made these two words voluntarily and perfectly. He has freely chosen to associate distinct ideas into a complex idea, so as "to express ... to others, by that one sound, all the simple *Ideas* contain'd and united in that complex one." In subsequent years, Locke's story continues, Adam's children enjoy the same ability he did—of combining simple ideas into complex ones. But they do not replace Adam's perfectly adequate words with their own coinages. Indeed, they do not have the same freedom of coinage that Adam did; having "found these two Words, *Kinneah* and *Niouph*, in familiar use," they cannot "take them for insignificant sounds: but must needs conclude, they stood for something, for certain *Ideas*, abstract *Ideas*, they being general Names."[327]

Adam's legacy, in short—or, better, the legacy of those like Adam who founded new societies, voluntarily coined the complex ideas they deemed necessary—is to have bequeathed to subsequent society sets of words made by human ingenuity, which subsequent generations

[327] *Essay*, 3.6.45.

cannot help but hear as significant, but which they cannot themselves properly understand without inquiring into the intention of the coiner as deductible from working usage. Locke thus reframes the notion of semiotic inheritance. It is not that Adam named things like Justice as they "really are." It is that he named them at all—thus exercising, when this exercise was peculiarly significant, a capacity inherent in all human beings. Likewise, he and those like him named substances—"gold"—but in this case without knowing fully what it was they were naming. Over time, then, the inheritors of Adam's lexicon can 1) refer to the original intention of the linguistic coiner, and gain a firmer sense of a complex idea's meaning; and 2) through experiments and observations, contribute to the inexhaustible task of knowing substances down to their natural "Archetypes" (to use Locke's preferred term for things as they are in nature). We still have the capacity to use language as Adam did—"to make any complex *Ideas* of mixed Modes, by no other Pattern, but by his own Thoughts" and to affix "any new name to any *Idea*."[328] But, like Adam's children, "Men in Society" are "furnished already with Names for their *Ideas*, and common Use having appropriated known names to certain *Ideas*, an affected misapplication of them cannot but be very ridiculous." At times, new coinages are indeed necessary; but not often; and in any case, whenever using new words or old words in unfamiliar senses, humans are bound to respect communicative expectations—to use words as we understand them to be commonly used, to define our terms when asked to, and to clarify any new words or unfamiliar usages we find that we have need of.

Toward the end of his long discussion of Adam, Locke arrives directly at the problem of enthusiasm as related to the use of language. Indeed, it is worth pointing out, his concern with enthusiasm generally arrives at the ends of his sections, which is visible not just in this section but in the structure of Book III in general, which closes with chapters on "the imperfection of words," "the abuse of words," and "remedies of the foregoing imperfections and abuses." A similar arc

[328] *Essay*, 3.6.51.

toward the problem of enthusiasm can be perceived in the whole of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*—the fourth edition of which closes with masterful denunciations of "enthusiasm" and "wrong assent" before offering a short (but, as we'll see, illuminating) account of the "divisions of the sciences." Locke added his chapter on enthusiasm (along with a chapter on "Association of Ideas") to this fourth edition, a fact which might be taken to indicate that for Locke the application of his philosophy to the problem of enthusiasm is something of an afterthought. I disagree with this view—as does Locke's biographer, Roger Woolhouse, who remarks that it is "surprising that Locke had waited until now before including a chapter on 'Enthusiasm'" given not only that his interest in this concept is evident in the correspondence with Masham we looked at above, but also that he maintained throughout his life an outspoken interest in enthusiasm and intellectual opposition to enthusiasts—in particular to Quakers, even though some of his good friends, including Benjamin Furly, belonged to this society.[329] My sense is that the chapter on enthusiasm is not an afterthought; rather, it makes explicit one of the key motivating forces behind the *Essay* as a whole. It brings to the surface of the text one of the germs of Locke's philosophy. Locke included the chapter following correspondence with William Molyneux on the question of whether or not Nicolas Malebranche could be considered an enthusiast, an exchange that might have prompted Locke—who thought it was perfectly obvious that Malebranche was indeed an enthusiast—to render as clear as possible certain inferences regarding enthusiasm and divine inspiration which he took to be implicit in his already thorough discussions of "the imperfections of words," "the abuse of words," and in other sections of the *Essay*.[330]

At any rate, in these culminating sections of the *Essay*, Locke more than hints at the urgency of his inquiry into this matter (which Aarsleff does not emphasize). He is concerned, above all, with the abuse of language, as he sees it, in sectarian discourse surrounding moral

[329] Woolhouse, 418.
[330] See de Beer, letter 1620.

and—especially—religious questions. It is well known that the *Essay* begins, as he puts it in his Epistle to the Reader (1690), with an impulse to clarify the terms of theological and moral discourse in his time.[331] In these culminating or summary sections of the *Essay*, this urge comes to the forefront. As he puts it toward the close of Book III:

> Where shall one find any, either *controversial Debate*, or *familiar Discourse*, concerning *Honour*, *Faith*, *Grace*, *Religion*, *Church*, etc. wherein it is not easy to observe the different Notions Men have of them; which is nothing but this, that they are not agreed in the signification of those Words; nor have in their minds the same complex *Ideas* which they make them stand for: and so all the contests that follow thereupon, are only about the meaning of a Sound.[332]

And as he continues some of the confidence of his earlier gestures toward what we might now call an "originalist" perspective on intention and interpretation are qualified:

> And hence we see, that in the interpretation of Laws, whether Divine or Humane, there is no end; Comments beget Comments, and Explications make new matter for Explications. And of limiting, distinguishing, varying the signification of these moral Words there is no end. These *Ideas* of Men's making, are, by Men still having the same Power [that is, the same Adamic capacity to name mixed modes], multiplied *in infinitum*.[333]

Locke, in short, sees his book on Words—a book that largely inaugurates the modern philosophy of language—as addressing the problem of public speech in the long wake of the Protestant Reformation. He hears, in the language of the proliferation of sects, a widespread abuse of the

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[331] Locke writes in his Epistle to the Reader that the motive for writing the *Essay* came following a discussion of matters "very remote" from the basic question of the understanding (7). A friend of Locke's, James Tyrrell, who was at that initial discussion, recalled it has having being about morality and revealed religion, suggesting that the impasse in conversation on these topics, which are related to the question of revelation at the heart of enthusiasm, motivated Locke to interrogate the basic nature of knowledge and language—of how things can be known and discussed at all. See Maurice Cranston, *John Locke, A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 140–1.
[332] *Essay*, 3.9.9.
[333] Ibid.

Adamic capacity to form and understand the meanings of complex words. People are choosing to understand words in their own way, and to make new words that don't need to be made. On one hand, as individual inheritors of Adam's power to name, they are certainly able to do this; on the other, as members of larger polities born into societies with functioning linguistic definitions, to exercise this power is, in a sense, to abuse it.

In his theory of the arbitrary word, Locke thus finds a linguistic-philosophical means of reframing the problem of enthusiasm. And, as with the other counter-enthusiasms we've looked at, this reframing respects the divisions associated with the process of rationalization. His account of language is grounded in careful attention to subjective human capacity—evident in his emphasis on the role of ideas in mediating between things and words, and in his insistence that humans are free, like so many Adams, to define combinations of ideas (i.e. to create mixed modes). He insists that nature is separate from this subjective capacity—evident in his discussion of the names of substances, which belong to God and Nature, and thus cannot be known or finally defined by humans. And he finds that society mediates both the subjective and objective dimensions of language. One inherits the (freely-created) mixed modes of the past, and one is duty-bound to respect the intended definitions of those modes, and change them only cautiously and explicitly. The arbitrary word, in this view, is arbitrary in two senses. It is arbitrary in the sense that each word—whether a name for a substance or a coinage combining prior ideas—was named freely and arbitrarily by some person, who could have chosen any sound at all to represent the idea at issue. It is also arbitrary in the sense that one born into a language is in a sense legally beholden to that language, bound to respect its authority to judge between language users, to settle conflicts of definition, to establish conventional usage. Language, in Locke's view, is thus intersubjective—moderating at once between subjectivities, and between society and nature. This conclusion feels, perhaps, obvious. But such a feeling should not overshadow the degree to

which it was innovative—and pitched against a much more widespread understanding of language as combining, rather than mediating, the distinct orders of God, society, nature, and self.

Thus Locke's project continues the deep philosophical work of redefining prophetic authority through the distinction among and rearrangement of these three validity spheres—self, nature, and society. Indeed, although the point cannot be done justice here, the final division of knowledge proposed by Locke at the close of the *Essay* precisely respects the needs of rationalization—splitting the world into 1) things in themselves, proper to investigation by natural philosophy; 2) the art of happiness, proper to ethics; and 3) the doctrine of signs, most generally words, proper to a new sort of logician. Nature, self, and society. Science, self-help, and semiotics.[334] This is the foundational tri-fold split of the secular, articulated against the intermodal power of unlicensed prophetic utterance.

At the same time, it is worth reiterating, Locke departs from the similar counter-enthusiastic schema of earlier thinkers. John Locke, following but refuting the physiological-metaphysical tradition of counter-enthusiasm practiced by the Cambridge Platonists, rearticulates the problem of false prophecy as confusion about the true nature of language. Words are not containers of essences linking humans and the divine. They bridge humans and divine things only through the untrustworthy media of complex ideas—which are wholly invented by humans, and assembled from simpler ideas. Instead of kinds of true and false prophets, Locke describes kinds of words (respectively naming things and ideas) which might be used well or badly. The knowing user of language, who knows the difference between significations of substances and of mixed modes, and who uses terms accurately and consistently, has taken the place of the prophetically attuned philosopher. The abuser of language, who takes the Adamic inheritance of humans, semiotic freedom, as an occasion to needlessly coin new terms, use established terms inconsistently, confuse the *names* of substances for substances *as they are in nature*, and otherwise

[334] *Essay,* 4.21.

turn language against its own rational structure, emerges in Locke's philosophy as a conduit for false prophecy. Such users muddy the stream of revelation, natural and human. They don't necessarily do so maliciously or intentionally—but given the confusion they loose on the world, this hardly matters.

Hence Locke's interest in the theory of language is not, as some Locke scholars seem to believe, pursued for its own sake. Nor is it merely pursued as a ramification of his interest in epistemology.[335] It follows from his concern with connecting the structure of larger political authority to the microcosmic level of the word. He wishes to show that there are responsible and irresponsible ways to use words. And he wishes to show this because he sees the political-theological discourse of the seventeenth-century as defined by linguistic difficulties. As he writes:

> Many a Man, who was pretty well satisfied of the meaning of a Text or Scripture, or Clause in the Code, at first reading, has by consulting Commentators, quite lost the sense of it, and, by those Elucidations, given rise or increase to his Doubts, and drawn obscurity upon the place. I say not this, that I think Commentaries needless; but to shew how uncertain the Names of mixed Modes naturally are, even in the mouths of those, who had both the Intention and the Faculty of Speaking as clearly, as Language was capable to express their Thoughts.[336]

This is not simply an off-hand comment about the tendency of different people to interpret the same words and phrases in different ways. Locke is here identifying a fundamental religious issue. People need to know, in a clear manner, what the Bible says. But the structure of mixed modes—which always refer to conventional associations of ideas that are not ever perfectly identical for any two language users—makes this task very difficult. He sees the value of his discussion of language to inhere in having clearly articulated this problem, in the hope that it might be redressed. Moreover, he believes that the proper definition of language might do much to stem

[335] Cf. Guyer, 144.
[336] *Essay*, 3.9.9.

conflict in general—to prevent religiously-motivated civil uprisings like those that marked him so deeply in the 1650s, suggesting (Wittgenstein *avant la lettre*) that "the greatest part of the Disputes in the World, are ... merely Verbal" and that the careful reduction of disputed terms to "the simple *Ideas* they do or should stand for" would end "those Disputes" of themselves, and cause them immediately to "vanish."[337] In short, he sees the proper understanding and use of words as essential to identifying and avoiding what we have called the problem of enthusiasm.

As we turn to the next major work of Locke's we will consider, it is important to stress this connection between his investigation of words in general and religious scriptures in particular. He sees his work in the *Essay* as having prepared the way for work in the latter area—in the clear and proper interpretation of scripture. Of course, this task brings with it a whole new set of problems—and Locke identifies these in the essay. In addition to attending to the inherent difficulties of language use, one who would elucidate the language of a person who lives in another country and uses another language must be greatly compounded. One who would elucidate the writings of a person who lived in "remote Ages, wherein the Speakers and Writers had very different Notions, Tempers, Customs, Ornaments, and Figures of Speech, *etc.* every one of which, influenced the signification of their Words then, though to us now they are lost and unknown" faces an even more difficult task. And yet such tasks must be undertaken, as "Discourses of Religion, Law, and Morality … matter of the highest concernment."[338]

Having identified in the *Essay* the difficulty attending one's own language in one's own context, he seeks next to attempt to attend to another's language, in a foreign tongue, a different country, and a distant context. He seeks to do this because such people happen to have been, in his view, receptacles for the divine. Just as he investigates the nature of language in order to clarify abuses of religious and political authority in his own time, so he seeks to investigate

[337] *Essay,* 3.11.7.
[338] *Essay,* 3.9.22.

scripture in order to clarify the true nature of religious and political authority for all time. Again, he goes for the root of spiritual authority.

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3. *Locke Reads St. Paul Himself*

The *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* is neither the first nor the most widely read work of Locke's to address matters of religion. His "Letter Concerning Toleration" (1689), which argues for the strict separation of civil and religious authority, remains his best known such work. *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), an extended close reading of the Gospels in which he argues that Christianity can be summed up as a minimal belief in the divinity of Jesus and the saving power of his crucifixion, and that all additional doctrinal matters should be understood as supplemental to these basic articles of faith, has also been deeply studied in recent decades for clues as to Locke's fundamental theological orientation.[339] I don't dispute the centrality of these works. But I do wish to recover the *Paraphrase* as a key document not only in his theological thought, but in his theorization of language. Indeed, the *Paraphrase* helps show just how deeply these two concerns are entangled for Locke.

I will suggest that the *Paraphrase*, written in the last decade of his life, undertakes to elucidate and overcome precisely the difficulties identified in the closing passages of Book III of the *Essay* cited above. In the *Essay*, he considers language as such, and the flaws and abuses attending its basic structure (and following, generally, from the fact that words are not signs of things, but signs of our ideas of things). In the *Paraphrase*, he considers a particularly significant set of documents—of foundational importance for his own faith (he emphasizes in his Prologue to the *Paraphrase* that he began this work as a private devotional exercise in exegesis, so that he might better understand the chief supplemental tenets of his Christian faith, i.e. those that go beyond the necessary beliefs outlined in the Gospels according to the *Reasonableness*) and, insofar

[339] See, e.g., John Marshall, *Resistance*, 301 ff. Marshall concludes that Locke was an anti-trinitarian thinker.

as he takes his faith to be (at least ostensibly) that of England, Europe, and the world, to important questions pertaining to the right conduct of the Christian. In the *Essay*, Locke expresses a hope that attending to the true nature of signification will improve public discourse. In the *Paraphrase*, similarly, Locke hopes to introduce a method for discovering the difficulties in interpreting an individual author, and thus (as we will see) to improve the tenor of theological discourse as it relates to a particularly important human vehicle of revelation.

Critics and scholars who have written on Locke's *Paraphrase* have noticed some resonances between this work and his *Essay*, but these have generally centered on comparisons of the basic theological positions described in both works. This approach is evident, for instance, in the work of Arthur Wainwright, whose erudite critical edition of the *Paraphrase* further emphasizes the centrality of the defense of revelation in relation to reason in the *Paraphrase*—a connection which we will also develop below.[340] John Marshall, meanwhile, draws on the *Paraphrase* in his investigation of Locke's own religious beliefs, finding here (as he does in the *Reasonableness* and elsewhere) evidence suggesting that Locke was Non-Trinitarian.[341] Others, including David C. Snyder and Mark Glat, find peripheral support in the *Paraphrase* for their understandings of Locke's larger interests in, respectively, the tension between faith and doubt, and the importance of the study of history.[342] Few are interested in Locke's *Paraphrase* as it reveals Locke's relationship to language theory—with the important exception of Frances Ferguson. She sees Locke on Paul as participating in a tradition of English Dissenting hermeneutics that contrasts in interesting ways with the Higher Criticism that developed in eighteenth-century Germany.[343] Ferguson is wonderfully sensitive to the literary originality of Locke's approach to the Bible, but without the background of the discourse of enthusiasm this originality is somewhat

[340] See John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*, 2 vols., edited by Arthur W. Wainwright (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987), 31 ff.
[341] Marshall, *Resistance*, 424-27.
[342] David C. Snyder, "Faith and Reason in Locke's *Essay*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47.2 (1986): 197-213; Mark Glat, "John Locke's Historical Sense," *The Review of Politics* 43.1 (1981): 3-21.
[343] Frances Ferguson, "Dissenting Textualism: The Claims of Psychological Method in the Long Romantic Period," *Studies in Romanticism* 49.4 (2010): 577-99.

skewed in her account. Locke appears to be merely annoyed at lazy rehearsals of Pauline catchphrases that are "famous for being famous."[344] In fact, as this study has prepared us to see, Locke is deeply concerned with the instant spiritual legitimacy available to those who employ Biblical verses—and in particular verses, like Paul's, tending to obscurity—as vehicles for whatever meanings they happen to be carrying around.

In other words, the *Paraphrase* continues the work of reframing spiritual authority against those called enthusiasts. We are in a position to see this work as a logical continuation of Locke's concern with the deepest questions of signification stemming from his interest in reforming moral and theological language following decades of religious war, hot and cold. I will argue in the following sections that one can identify in the *Paraphrase* a hermeneutic project—that is, a project concerned with the nature of interpretation, particularly as it relates to the discernment of the will of God through the reading of scripture—meant to complement and extend the semiotic project—that is, the project concerned with the nature of signs and meaning—we have already identified in the *Essay*. In the following, I will show that the *Paraphrase* extends and applies the theory of signification Locke introduced in Book III of the *Essay*, showing how a theory of interpretation might relate to a theory of the arbitrary word. As we have seen, Locke's theory of arbitrary signification insists that we recognize the gaps and pitfalls that exist in any attempt to communicate meaning. People cannot communicate their impressions mind-to-mind, as it were. They must appeal to signs which have special associations that will be lost in translation unless—or perhaps even if—both speaker and hearer are assiduously careful in defining the sort of thing being discussed (whether a substance or a "mixed mode") and holding to that definition. Likewise, as we will see, his hermeneutics emphasizes the situation of words and ideas within the human minds that used these words. It asks readers to recognize the distance between their own understandings of words and the understandings of others—a distance exacerbated by the many

[344] Ferguson, 593.

complex layers of intention and context evident in the interpretation of ancient writing that are not part of an ordinary speech situation. His hermeneutics situates the arbitrary word—with its emphases on distinguishing between one's own mind, the minds of others, and the substances (known at bottom only to God) and mixed-modes (conventionally defined as certain associations of ideas) to which these minds refer—within deep historical time.

It is worth stating some of the central claims of my argument at the outset of this reading of the *Paraphrase*. I show that Locke's hermeneutics emphasizes the minds making meaning in the reading process. He seeks to clarify the mind of the writer of the ancient words he is reading—in this case, the mind of Paul. This is why he emphasizes the authority of "St. Paul Himself" in his interpretations. Locke proposes to come as close as possible to understanding Paul's words precisely as Paul intended them to be understood. From our contemporary vantage, this is perhaps not a revolutionary proposal. But in Locke's own context, it certainly was revolutionary. It requires the reader to accept that the mind and the words of St. Paul exist independently of the revealed knowledge that they carry from God to humans. What matters is not the textual fact of his words in themselves, but his peculiar uses of these words. There is nothing holy about Paul's language itself. It is not shot through him by God, as though God has commandeered his linguistic faculties.[345] It is Paul's own language, reflecting Paul's own ideas. Those ideas, Locke believes, are indeed the result of divine revelation. They carry divine knowledge. But they carry this knowledge only through Paul's knowledge—only through Paul's reason. These divine messages must then be deciphered through a careful study of Paul's words—which must be treated as his own, not God's. Moreover, they must be treated as they reflect the particular tasks of his letters, not as holy nuggets available for reappropriation according to the preferences and

[345] Precisely, by the way, as God promises he will do to Moses in one of the foundational Bible passages for understanding the nature of prophecy: "And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me? Then the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I make you a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land" (Ex 6.30-7.2).

ideas of any given hearer. In his *Paraphrase*, in short, Locke's general understanding of words as mediating things and ideas—views developed in response to the raging public contests over spiritual authority he witnessed in his lifetime—becomes, in his reading of Paul, a schema for thinking through the relation between God's revelation and Paul's particular modes of utterance: between, one might say, the truth and style.

These observations will find textual support in the discussion below. But first it is important to establish Locke's reasons for writing about Paul at all. Why does he choose to write at such length about this particular figure, and these particular Epistles? First of all, Locke seems personally drawn to Paul's letters above all the books of the Bible save Acts and the Gospels (which he already thoroughly covered in the *Reasonableness*). Allusions to Paul pepper his works. And the cadences of Paul's language frequently undergird Locke's most poetic moments (contrary to his wooden reputation, such poetic moments are not infrequent in his writings). Indeed, Locke's attachment to the phraseology of Paul's Epistles might be seen as problematic, as it expressly violates one of his chief hermeneutic principles—not to slice the Apostle's language into verses and chunks, as the early stewards of his writings so ill-advisedly did in editing the whole of the Bible, and reapply their authoritative force to one's particular thoughts and needs.[346] At any rate, it is clear that Locke's *Paraphrase* of Paul is, to a degree, a labor of love.

But it is not only this. Paul, as we've already had occasion to notice, was among the most frequently cited sources for dissenting and nonconforming Christians in the seventeenth century. His letters were, in short, a trove of spiritual authority available for appropriation by those daring enough to lay claim to them. We've already seen Prophet Hunt borrowing from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians for his revolutionary call to "take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6.17). One might find the same phrase emphasized in the Digger Gerrard Winstanley's *Watchword to the City of London*, as he recounts a prayer following physical persecution

[346] *Paraphrase*, 106.

for digging and planting "upon *George*'s Hill": "And so I see Father, that *England* yet does choose rather to fight with the Sword of Iron, and covetousnesse, then by the Sword of the Spirit which is love."[347] Consider the Ranter Abiezer Coppe's *Fiery Flaming Roll*, where (writing against the Diggers and Levellers, and in the voice of "the Lord") he too takes up the spiritual sword of Ephesians: "I come not forth (in him) either with materiall sword, or Mattock, but now (in this my day —) I make him my Swordbearer, to brandish the Sword of the Spirit, as he hath done severall dayes and nights together, thorow the streets of this great City."[348] Or consider, in a letter of Oliver Cromwell (following his capture of Edinburgh Castle after the Covenanters sided with Charles I), the mingling of this phrase from Ephesians with (in Cromwell's italics) cadences from 2 Corinthians 10.5: "When [the Scottish resisters] purely trust to the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which is *powerful to bring down strong holds, and every imagination that exalts it self*, which alone is able to square and fit the stones for the *New Jerusalem*; Then, and not before, and by that means, and no other, shall *Jerusalem* (which is to be the praise of the whole Earth) the City of the Lord be built, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel."[349] In short, consider the writings of most accused enthusiasts—and these three are among the ubiquitously named targets of this charge—and one will find not just this phrase, but many phrases of Paul's Epistles recycled, repurposed, reemphasized to fit and undergird the political occasion at hand.[350] In the writings of those called enthusiasts, Paul is everywhere.

Or rather, as Locke has it, not Paul himself—but only Paul's phrases. In his Prologue to the *Paraphrase*, Locke bemoans the practice of "snatch[ing] out a few Words, as if they were

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[347] Gerrard Winstanley, *A watch-word to the city of London, and the Armie, wherein you may see that Englands freedome, which should be the result of all our victories, is sinking deeper under the Norman power, as appears by the relation of the unrighteous proceedings of Kingstone-Court against some of the Diggers at George-hill, under colour of law; but yet thereby the cause of the Diggers is more brightened and strengthened: so that every one singly may truly say what his freedome is, and where it lies* (1649), 10. *EEBO*.
[348] Abiezer Coppe, *A fiery flying roll* (1650), 2. *EEBO*.
[349] Oliver Cromwell, *Several letters and passages between His Excellency, the Lord General Cromwel and the governor of Edinburgh Castle, and the ministers there, since His Excellencies entrance into Edinburgh. Published by authority* (1650), 5.
[350] The influence of Paul on the rhetoric and theology — and theological rhetoric — of seventeenth-century radical politics is certainly a topic worth investigating, and such an investigation has been prepared in part by such works as Julia Rheinhard Lupton's *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

separate from the rest, to serve a Purpose, to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do." Locke continues:

> But as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it, may at a cheap rate be a notable Champion for the Truth, that is, for the Doctrines of the Sect that Chance or Interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with Verses of Sacred Scripture, containing Words and Expressions that are but flexible (as all general obscure and doubtful ones are) and his System that has appropriated them to the Orthodoxie of his Church, makes them immediately strong and irrefragable Arguments for his Opinion. This is the Benefit of loose Sentences, and Scripture crumbled into Verses, which quickly turn into independent Aphorisms.[351]

Here one can see the discourse of enthusiasm—the concern with unlicensed hermeneutics, the ironic evocation of an "Orthodoxie" that consists of one member's "Opinion"—with, again, the etymological link to heresy. The problem with Paul, in brief, is that he is prone to enthusiastic appropriations. His letters are a stagnant pond breeding overweening readers of the Bible—and the pond needs to be cleared up.

Locke considers Paul, in particular, to be prone to problematic decontextualizations. Conversant in the myriad pamphlets disseminated in England and the Low Countries (his home during his exile from England during the reign of James II), Locke observes the degree to which Paul's phrases were cherry-picked to support all sides in the political-theological disputes of the young public sphere. He notes that "sober Christians" of his acquaintance have tended to notice that "ordinary illiterate People," that is to say, again, the unlearned and untrained, "who were Professors, that shew'd a Concern for Religion," that is, who were particularly and outspokenly pious, "seem'd much more conversant in St. Paul's Epistles, than in the plainer, and as it seem'd

[351] *Paraphrase,* 106

to them much more intelligible Parts of the New Testament."[352] Locke here underscores the difficulty of Paul's letters, and the degree to which certain—i.e. *good*—Christians, those who have been trained in ancient languages and comport themselves soberly, admit these difficulties, and generally find them "too hard to be master'd," and find that they cannot "reach the Apostle's Meaning all along in the Train of what he said."[353] Meanwhile, other—i.e., perhaps, *bad*—Christians are peculiarly conversant in precisely these obscure letters, and act as though they understand them perfectly, leading the good Christians at a loss to "imagin what those saw in them, whose Eyes they thought not much better than their own."[354] To simplify, the good Christians find Paul obscure. The bad Christians find him—delightfully quotable.

By now these hermeneutical gestures should feel familiar. Locke is falling into the conventional register of the discourse of enthusiasm stretching all the way back to Cramner—where unlicensed, untrained readers are contrasted with sober, well-behaved ones. As he continues, he connects this contrast (in the manner of the Cambridge Platonists) to what we might call at this point—albeit in a lightly rather than heavily foregrounded form—the reason versus imagination trope. Locke writes:

> [T]he Case was plain, These sober inquisitive Readers had a mind to see nothing in St. Paul's Epistles but just what he meant; whereas those others of a quicker and gayer Sight could see in them what they pleased. Nothing is more acceptable to Phansie than plyant Terms and Expressions that are not obstinate, in such it can find its account with Delight, and with them be illuminated, Orthodox, infallible at pleasure and in its own way.[355]

Locke links a certain kind of reader—one dominated by "Phansie"—to this sort of text—"full of plyant Terms and Expressions that are not obstinate." Such readers take pleasure in bending

[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid.
[354] 106.
[355] *Paraphrase,* 106-7.

"Sacred Scripture to their Opinions … to make as they can a Cover and Guard of them."[356] Thus they can be "illuminated, Orthodox, infallible at pleasure." And Locke stresses that such readers find this process "Delight[ful]." They take pleasure in bending the Good Book to their own ideas.

Paul may not be a problem for religion himself—but his particular way of writing creates problems. He appeals not to the sober so much as to the fanciful. The fanciful fill his obscure phrases with their own pet meanings. They find in Paul ample opportunity to exploit the inherent ambiguity of language outlined in the *Essay*. And so the central task of Locke's *Paraphrase* is to stabilize the meaning of this source of so much delightful ambiguity. Paul's words have been used as weapons in the battle of ideas. They need to be shown to be, at bottom, just words like any other words. As Locke puts it:

> But if the Quotation in the Verce produc'd, were consider'd as a part of a continued coherent Discourse, and so its Sense were limited by the Tenour of the Context, most of these forward and warm Disputants would be quite strip'd of those, which they doubt not now to call Spiritual Weapons, and they would have often nothing to say that would not shew their Weakness, and manifestly fly in their Faces.[357]

Paul's words must be de-weaponized. One must hear in this passage a sardonic allusion to the very phrase considered above. In attending to the flow of Paul's discourse, Locke proposes to turn "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" against those who have wielded it so arrogantly—not by flinging them back, as ammunition, but by treating them like any other words, as context-dependent and linked to certain stable definitions.

Locke's approach to Paul's language thus has a double quality that can be somewhat tricky for a modern reader. On one hand, he appears to want to disenchant Paul's letters. He wishes them to be read like any other letters, and he wishes Paul to be treated as an author like any other author (as St. Paul *himself*). According to Locke, this is the only way his writings will

[356] *Paraphrase,* 107.
[357] *Paraphrase*, 106.

ever be made clear—if they are treated as ordinary. At the same time, Locke clearly thinks that Paul's letters are more than ordinary. They are documents of revelation. Paul himself is a vehicle of revelation. As Locke writes, "St. Paul was miraculously called to the Ministry of the Gospel, and declared to be a chosen Vessel."[358] What he has to say is of the greatest importance, for it is guided by God. These can feel like contradictory observations. Paul should be read as any author, yet Paul is more than just any author—he is an apostle, a writer inspired by the Holy Spirit. And perhaps they are. But they are both central to Locke's project. One might clarify this situation somewhat by noting that Paul's words, insofar as they are words, are, for Locke, utterly ordinary. They are conventional signs (albeit referring to a context that is no longer accessible) used by a particular human being. But, for Locke, Paul's general meaning—his larger message in each letter—is extraordinary. This is the dimension of his writing that can be called a vehicle of revelation—the larger point. And it must be added that Locke assumes this larger point is there in Paul as an article of faith. He accepts Paul into the canon of revelation. Thus he assumes that Paul must be—from some vantage, however difficult to obtain—perfectly consistent and clear. He writes, after all, under the influence of the divine, and the divine, for Locke, is consistent and clear. The divine does not equivocate. Therefore Paul must not equivocate—even if he appears to do so quite frequently, which is, of course, the whole problem in the first place, the quality of his writing that makes him so attractive to the "illiterate" and so confusing to the "sober."

This, then, is Locke's task in the *Paraphrase*—to show an apparently disordered mind to be, in fact, divinely ordered. And he marshals a sophisticated hermeneutical apparatus to this task. Just as he introduces, in his theory of signs, the notion of individual and distinct ideas interfering between things and human words for those things (whether physical or abstract), in the *Paraphrase* he introduces, as the medium between his mind and the words on the page, the mind of the author—Paul's mind. Locke proposes to understand the language of the Epistles by attending to

[358] *Paraphrase*, 110.

a number of "difficulties"—or, as a structuralist might say centuries later, different semiotic levels.[359]

1) Locke attends to the peculiarity of the historical language Paul uses in the composition of the letters, at least from the perspective of the modern reader: "The Terms are Greek, but the Idiom or Turn of the Phrases may be truly said to be Hebrew or Syriak."[360] Thus Locke proposes something like an Adamic ear, able to hear things as they once sounded. This does not involve (as proposed by Jakob Boehme—or, more to the point in Locke's case, the Quakers) understanding his language through attunement to a persisting essence vibrating within words, but through the literal assumption of hermeneutic context.[361] Even if he is, as Locke puts it, "a chosen Vessel," one must hear Paul not as a vessel of prophetic *words*, where a prophetic capacity is attributed to his words themselves, but as a user of what would have been in his day quite ordinary language. It's not the words that are prophetic. It's Paul who is prophetic.

2) Locke attends to Paul's own personal peculiarities as they inflect his sense. Paul, Locke writes, was "a Man of quick Thought, warm Temper, mighty well vers'd in the Writings of the Old Testament, and full of the Doctrine of the New: All this put together, suggested Matter to him in abundance on those Subjects which came in his way: So that one may consider him when he was writing, as beset with a Crowd of Thoughts, all striving for Utterance. In this Posture of Mind it was almost impossible for him to keep that slow Pace, and observe minutely that Order and Method of ranging all he said, from which results an easie and obvious Perspicuity."[362] Here Locke comes close to falling into the traditional language of early counter-enthusiasm—the

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[359] For Locke's "Difficulties," see Appendix IV in Wainwright, vol. 2, 672-74.
[360] *Paraphrase*, 104.
[361] The possible influence of Quaker reading practices on Locke's philosophy of language is a promising avenue of study which is beyond the scope of the present project. One might begin with Locke's close friend Benjamin Furly, who co-authored with George Fox a fascinating work of political linguistics, as it were, proposing that ancient languages recognize no distinction between "thou" and "you," and so neither should present languages. See Fox, *A battle-door for teachers & professors to learn singular & plural you to many, and thou to one, singular one, thou, plural many, you : wherein is shewed ... how several nations and people have made a distinction between singular and plural, and first, in the former part of this book, called The English battle-door, may be seen how several people have spoken singular and plural* (1660). *EEBO*. Locke lived with Furly during his years in Rotterdam and maintained a warm correspondence with him through his later life.
[362] *Paraphrase*, 104

Lutheran language of "Schwaermer." Paul is imagined as nearly manic-melancholic, beset by "a Crowd of Thoughts, all striving for Utterance." But significantly this doesn't discredit him as a vessel of revelation—as it would have in an earlier, simpler discourse (say, that of Jean Bodin or John Smith) which needs its true prophets to appear, physically as well as mentally, calm, rational, enlightened. Locke has moved past the physiological counter-enthusiasm of his predecessors.[363]

3) Locke proposes that understanding Paul requires attention to the range of personae this author inhabits: "[T]he frequent changing of the Personage he speaks in, renders the Sense very uncertain, and is apt to mislead one that has not some Clue to guide him; sometimes by the Pronoun I, he means himself; sometimes any Christian; sometimes a Jew, and sometimes any Man, etc."[364] Understanding Paul requires stepping into the range of Paul's rhetorical self-identifications.

4) And finally, understanding Paul requires paying attention to the history of interference with the meaning of these Epistles. First, there is the level editorial interference with his letters—particularly perpetrated by those who divided the letters, in a way totally inimical to the epistolary genre, into chapters and verses, "whereby they are so chop'd and minc'd, and, as they are now Printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the Common People take the Verses usually for distinct Aphorisms; but even Men of more advanc'd Knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the Coherence, and the Light that depends on it."[365] Second, there are those commentators, ancient and recent, whose "Philosophy also has its part in mis-leading Men from the true Sense of the Sacred Scripture."[366]

Thus in reading Paul, Locke proposes that the best way to properly understand scripture is to stop treating it as a special kind of writing. Treat it, rather, as you would treat any book—

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[363] For a brief discussion by Locke of John Smith, see John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, edited by John C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 92.
[364] *Paraphrase,* 104.
[365] *Paraphrase*, 105.
[366] *Paraphrase*, 114.

and treat Paul's Epistles as you would treat any epistles: as a flow of thoughts related to a particular subject, not as a gathering of decontextualized aphorisms. "If Tully's Epistles were so printed, and so used," Locke observes, "I ask whither they would not be much harder to be understood, less easy and less pleasant to be read by much than now they are?" (106). The correct way to read Paul, then, is "to understand the Mind of him that writ it," and the way to do this is to "read the whole Letter through from one end to the other, all at once, to see what was the main Subject and Tendency of it: or if it had several Views and Purposes in it, not dependent one of another, nor in a Subordination to one chief Aim and End, to discover what those different Matters were, and where the Author concluded one, and began another."[367] The reader of Paul is charged with pushing beyond Paul's actual words, which are arbitrary signs, to "the Notions St. Paul then had in his Mind" when he first wrote them. "That is," Locke writes, "what we should aim at in reading him, or any other Author, and 'till we from his Words paint his very Ideas and Thoughts in our Minds, we do not understand him."[368]

Thus Locke's hermeneutics superficially resembles the much more radical approach of Spinoza, who, as is well known, proposes in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* to treat the scriptures as writings like any other writings. But, unlike Spinoza, Locke is certain that Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that the proper reading of his works might "make us rejoyce in the Light we receive from those most useful Parts of Divine Revelation."[369] As mentioned, he believes this in part in a circular way—Paul is divinely inspired because the Bible says so, or, in Locke's more emphatic language: "I remembred that St. Paul was miraculously called to the Ministry of the Gospel, and declared to be a chosen Vessel; that he had the whole Doctrine of the Gospel from God by immediate Revelation, and was appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, for the propagating of it in the Heathen World. This was enough to perswade me, that he was not a Man

[367] *Paraphrase,* 109-10.
[368] *Paraphrase*, 115.
[369] *Paraphrase,* 112.

of loose and shattered Parts, uncapable to argue, and unfit to convince those he had to deal with. God knows how to choose fit Instruments for the Business he employs them in."[370] Here one hears the figure we saw otherwise diminished in Locke's counter-enthusiasm—the rational prophet, who one can assume is reasonable because (one takes it according to tradition and by faith) the Bible says he is a prophet.

But there is more going on in this observation than might at first seem. Locke's reasoning here follows from his arguments regarding the relation of revelation and reason in both the *Essay* and *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. For Locke, God is the author of reason, which is necessary in his favored creature, the human being, because the huge majority of the workings of his Creation cannot be discovered by immediate sense perception. Such workings can only be discovered by reason—that is, by chains of certainty and probability formed by the diligent comparison of ideas.[371] And thus, only through reason can God's own existence be discovered. (In a very real sense, then, although Locke doesn't press the point, our existence as rational creatures is entangled with God's existence.) This is Locke's path to a thought familiar from early modern thinkers (and likely borrowed by Locke directly from Descartes): that God does not create contrary to reason, in a manner that would thus overthrow his own best creation, the human understanding.[372]

Revelation, in this way of thinking, is wholly compatible with reason. It is, for Locke, knowledge arrived at more quickly than by reason alone—but in a manner totally compatible with reason. As Gilda Radner says of comedy, it is truth—only faster. Locke puts it this way in *Reasonableness*: "[T]he first knowledge of the truths they have added, are owing to Revelation: Though as soon as they are heard and considered, they are found to be agreeable to Reason; and such as can by no means be contradicted. Every one may observe a great many truths which he

[370] *Paraphrase,* 110.
[371] *Essay,* 4.17.2-3.
[372] *Essay,* 4.18.5.

receives at first from others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason; which he would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength to have discovered himself."[373] The vessel of revelation, the prophet, then, is simply one who has heard the truth from the author of reason—who has been told what she or anyone would have been able to discover eventually, given enough time, patience, and intellectual strength. The prophet's mind is marked with a reasonable future, which she tells in the clearest terms possible (in simple language, and often using appealing imagery and vivid genres like parables) to those she addresses. What she says seems surprising only because we haven't followed the careful and clear chain of rational inferences from what we know now to the knowledge revealed—and indeed neither has she. The prophet provides solutions—and leaves proofs to natural reason. Or, as Locke puts it in the *Essay*, "In all that is of Divine Revelation there is need of no other Proof but that it is an Inspiration from GOD: For he can neither deceive nor be deceived."[374]

4. Non-Contradiction

Naturally, then, when one turns to the epistolary paraphrases themselves, one is stuck by Locke's balancing of a respect for the peculiarities of Paul's speech situation, and of a trust in the underlying coherence of his writings. Paul's words are restless in themselves, suggesting a mind roiling with ideas; but they also rest upon a God who respects above all the self-evident principle of non-contradiction. Just as there can be no two things in one place, so also for Locke there can be no one word with two meanings.[375] Paul's thoughts are crowded—and whose wouldn't be, if they had known the truth immediately, by revelation, before the chain of inferences could arrive there—but, upon examination, orderly. Thus the process of interpretation mirrors the dance of

[373] *Paraphrase,* 195.
[374] *Essay,* 4.19.11.
[375] Cf. "No Body can think that any Text of St. *Paul*'s Epistles has two contrary Meanings, and yet so it must have to two different Men, who taking two Commentators of different Sects for their respective Guides into the Sense of any one of the Epistles, shall build upon their respective Expositions" (108).

revelation and reason Locke sees as fundamental to revealed religion. Just as reason catches up with revelation, so the interpreter catches up with the prophetic writer. At the same time, the prophetic writer is never inconsistent with reason. Reason always lies packed into his words—in the firm and consistent correspondence of these words with fixed ideas. The interpreter only unpacks this condensed matter and draws it out in an easily understood chain.

One key upshot of this dance of reason and revelation in Locke's reading of Paul is that it is difficult at times to distinguish Locke's views from Paul's. On one hand, Locke is committed to proceeding in his reading of the text according to the principle of radical hermeneutical immersion in "St. Paul himself." He proposes to disappear as an interpretive presence, insofar as he can, and allow Paul's own thoughts to appear as clearly as they can be rendered into English. He is thus guided, theoretically, by no designs other than those of clarity and precision of interpretation. This should not affect the content of Paul's letters at all. Where Paul is clear, his meaning should be clear; where Paul is confused, his confusion should be clear.

However, in practice, Locke seldom finds confusion in Paul. Instead, he finds that Paul conforms in the great majority of his writings to the general current of sense—that is, to Locke's all-important principle of non-contradiction. Thus the content of Paul's letters is found to be in harmony with the method of Locke's hermeneutics. Both, it turns out, aim at consistency. Both, one might aver further, conform to the logical clarity of the universe—and thus to that of the Creator behind the universe. In this way, Locke's reading of Paul performs his sense of the relation between reason and revelation. Locke's reason catches up to Paul's revelation—but finds, upon close examination, that revelation to be perfectly consistent and reasonable. It is as though Locke and Paul are complementary figures in an prophetic allegory of reading, with Paul producing compact and gnarly phrases which Locke finds, after some contextualization and unpacking, to be quite lucid. Thus Paul plays sibyl to Locke's priest.

Locke detects Paul's reasonableness above all in the "main designe" of the letters he considers. In his Preface, Locke argues that the best way to understand Paul is to read a given letter all the way through a number of times, just as if it were an ordinary letter sent to oneself. Only then can one discover the larger gist of the whole. 1 Corinthians, for instance, is written "to support his own authority dignity and credit with that part of the church which stuck to him; to vindicate him self from the aspersions and calumnies of the opposite party; To lessen the credit of the cheif and leading men in it by intimateing their miscariages and shewing their noe cause of glorying or being gloried in," etc.[376] When the larger design of Paul's letters is emphasized, the particular ambiguities hiding in each turn of phrase seem less daunting. They can be reconciled with the larger sense of the letter, or they can be recognized as tangential and even extraneous. Not all parts of Paul's letters, in other words, are equally important—or, in a sense, equally revealed. What is *really* revealed is the larger gist; that's the indispensible message from the Holy Spirit. The individual words and phrases must be weighed according to this larger goal.

When one turns to the paraphrases themselves, however, this emphasis on the main design—the spirit of the word as gist—is frequently lost, as Locke devotes his hermeneutical efforts to meticulously disambiguating Paul's every phrase, word, and letter. Take, for instance, the "sword of the spirit" passage we've already looked at (Ephesians 6.17). Locke contextualizes this phrase within a more "general Exhortation" to the Ephesians "to stand firm against the Temptations of the Devil in the Exercise of Christian Vertues and Graces, which he proposes to them as so many pieces of Christian Armour, fit to arm them *Cap a pie*, and preserve them in the Conflict."[377] His paraphrase itself adds clarifications, taking care to tether the vehicles of Paul's allegory to stable tenors. Locke's primary text (the KJV) has this: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6.16-17). Locke

[376] *Paraphrase,* 164.
[377] *Paraphrase,* 658.

paraphrases this passage as follows: "Above all taking the Shield of Faith, wherein you may receive, and so render ineffectual all the fiery Darts of the wicked one, *i.e.* the Devil.—Take also the hopes of Salvation for an Helmet: and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."[378] He adds a footnote: "In this foregoing Allegory, St. *Paul* providing Armour for his Christian Soldier, to arm him at all points, there is no need curiously to explain wherein the peculiar Correspondence between those Virtues and those Pieces of Armour consisted, it being plain enough what the Apostle means, and wherewith he would have Believers be armed for their Warfare."[379] Locke's purpose, as one can see, is to disambiguate this troublesome passage. "The wicked" must not be taken for actual people. That would foment accusation and misunderstanding. This word is tied instead to the idea of "the wicked one"—the Devil. The phrase, "the helmet of salvation," shouldn't be turned around curiously—as though we ought to ponder why salvation would be a helmet rather than a breastplate or a pair of sandals. Locke merely clarifies that the Ephesians were to take, for a helmet, the "hopes of Salvation"—shifting the emphasis from this distracting vehicle, the helmet, to a sounder doctrinal link of hope and salvation (incidentally the primary focus of Locke's theological commentary in the *Paraphrase*). As for the sword of the spirit, Locke passes this by, perhaps to avoid controversy, without further specific comment.

In short, Locke positions himself as merely reading Paul. But in practice he is giving us *his* Paul—a Paul committed to clarity of expression, who without fail means his words to be interpreted in the most concrete and least ambiguous manner. He gives us, to be blunt, Paul as a late antique Locke. Consider another moment when Locke shows remarkable dexterity in rendering Paul's texts consistent, which also touches directly on the subject of prophecy. In 1 Corinthians 11.4-5, Paul writes, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth, or prophesieth with her head uncovered,

[378] *Paraphrase,* 659-60.
[379] *Paraphrase,* 660.

dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." And in 1 Corinthians 14.34, he writes, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Locke paraphrases the first passage:

> Every man that prayeth or prophesieth i e by the gift of the Spirit of god speaketh in the church for the edifying exhorting and comforting of the congregation having his head covered dishonoureth Christ his head, by appearing in a garb not becoming the authority and domination which god through Christ has given him over all the things of this world, the covering of the head being a mark of subjection: But on the contrary a woman praying or prophesying in the church with her head uncovered dishonoureth the man who is her head by appearing in a garb that disowns her subjection to him. For to appear bareheaded in publick is all one as to have her hair cut off.[380]

And the second:

> As to your women let them keep silence in your assemblys for it is not permitted them to discourse there or pretend to teach, that does noe way suit their state of subjection appointed them in the law.[381]

Locke appends to the first of these passages a long note explaining the pains necessary to imagine himself into Paul's situation and thus to discover how these two passages can be understood in a consistent manner. For, as Locke points out, Paul appears in the first passage implicitly to allow women to speak in church, and in the second to disallow the same. Locke explains that it was the custom at the time for women to be veiled in public, and that some women took off their veils in public religious assembly when praying, in order to be, like the men among them, exposed to God. Paul forbids this, as it symbolically upsets the patriarchal order. But he does not forbid them from praying and prophesying—so long as they keep their veils on. Locke infers that

[380] *Paraphrase,* 221-22.
[381] *Parphrase,* 245.

praying and prophesying, then, were exceptions to the general state of women's silence imposed in the second passage above. As Locke puts it:

> The women in the churches were not to assume the personage of Doctors, or speak there as teachers, this caryed with it the appearance of superiority, and was forbidden. Nay they were not soe much as to aske questions there or to enter into any sort of conference. This shews a kind of equality, and was also forbidden. […] But yet this subordination which god for orders sake had instituted in the world hinderd not but that by the supernatural gifts of the spirit he might make use of the weaker sex to any extraordinary function when ever he thought fit, as well as he did of the men. But yet when they thus either prayd or prophesied by the motion and impulse of the holy-ghost care was taken that whilst they were obeying god who was pleased by his spirit to set them a speaking, the subjection of their sex should not be forgotten, but owned and preserved by their being covered.[382]

Locke imagines a Corinthian lifeworld in which careful distinctions were observed between the sorts of spiritual movements felt in the congregation. All were able to pray aloud and subject to spontaneous prophesying. But even in the grip of the Holy Spirit, a distinction of power had to be observed—the veil had to remain.[383] In didactic matters, on the contrary, there was no reason for women to speak. They could only have done so voluntarily, not through the ventriloquizing movements of spirit, and thus to speak up either to teach or ask questions would have been perceived as insubordination.[384]

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[382] *Paraphrase,* 221-22.

[383] This leads, for Locke, into another affirmation of the reasonableness of the Christian female prophet, who, unlike "the Bacchai or Pythiai," does not need to "quit … their ordinary modest guise" when in the throes of spiritual raptures (221, 451).

[384] Locke's interpretation of Paul's apparent inconsistency in this matter—his orderly arrangement of Paul's ideas concerning women in the church—sparked considerably interest and controversy at the time, particularly (for obvious reasons) among Quakers. Although other interpreters, including Henry Hammond and Joseph Mede, had anticipated Locke's management of this problem, it was far from the consensus view at the time. Calvin, for instance, argued that Paul did not intend to give women permission to prophesy and pray aloud in church; he merely wanted to forbid them from removing their veils. Others insisted that Paul only permitted prayer and prophesying in private

The point I wish to bring out is quite simple. Locke presents himself in the Preface as committed to reading St. Paul himself, in his actual words, in his actual context—Locke, with something like false modesty, apologies in his Prologue "for having indeavoured to make St. Paul an Interpreter to me of his own Epistles."[385] But he ends up producing a Paul that shares his own meticulous commitment to differentiating between what Habermas will later call validity domains. His Paul distinguishes consistently between matters of individual, subjective experience—say, whether women can receive inspirations from the Holy Spirit—and matters of intersubjective political order—say, whether they should keep their heads covered as a sign of submission to their fathers and husbands. He finds too that Paul shares his commitment to the principle of non-contradiction. His words mean only one thing. They mean the simplest thing. At times, as in the allegory of the Christian soldier's armor, he doesn't bother to foreground this simplest meaning—but he would have been understood within his own context as having been perfectly clear and straightforward. For instance, he writes, the "evil." But he plainly means, "the evil one."

Locke's method is thus reflected in Paul's meaning. He finds his own cherished divine principle—the principle of non-contradiction—within this ancient conduit of revelation. This turn in Locke's handling of Paul is similar, finally, to that we saw in More's handing of H.N.—although, clearly, the one is inhabiting a positive, and the other a purely negative exemplar of Christian doctrine. Where More finds his own most cherished doctrinal principle—the Incarnation—opposed in the secret heart of the arch-enthusiast, H.N., Locke finds his own most

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homes, not in public assemblies (a reading that Locke rejects on the basis of Paul's consistent use of the term "prophesy" in the context of public worship). As Arthur Wainwright puts it, "Locke's interpretation, restrained and cautious as it appears to be, posed a threat to the accepted practice of restricting leadership in public worship to the male sex" (443). Locke appears, in short, to tease open the prophetic loophole whereby women could claim a sort of paradoxical spiritual authority through surrender of their autonomy to the movements of the Holy Spirit. He seems to be, in a very limited way, siding with so-called Quaker so-called enthusiasts — although, at the same time, he does so expressly in the interest of understanding the past workings of the church as they were actually practiced. He doesn't suppose that these miraculous happenings, which are limited to the age of the gospel, translate to his contemporary circumstances. The only revelation happening in the present, in Locke's view, is that proper to interpretation itself—to the reaching across time to meet the mind of another.

[385] *Paraphrase*, 113

cherished doctrinal principle—albeit one more philosophical than theological, the principle of non-contradiction—respected precisely where, in the scriptures, it seems at first most absent.

Locke emphasizes, in his Preface, the ultimate fallibility of his attempt to read St. Paul himself. He insists that his exercise is finally his alone. Each reader must understand Paul on his own—must "believe for [one]self" one's own "Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture."[386] In this way, Locke's *Paraphrase* rather models than accomplishes the task of rendering Paul intelligible. He shows how hard this task is, in the abstract. He outlines why it is so hard—how many levels of potential ambiguity one must navigate in order to settle one's sense of what Paul means. But he cannot finally produce Paul's own content definitively. Instead, he gives us a Paul who speaks to Locke. And in so doing he shows, albeit in a quieter way than either More or (as we'll see) Swift, that one can only defeat the problem of enthusiasm—the problem, from Locke's view, of irresponsible and unlicensed appropriation of scripture—by becoming enthusiastic oneself, in as careful a way as possible. Locke takes Paul back from the "illiterate." But in the course of doing this he remakes Paul in his own image. That he encourages you to do likewise—and to likewise be careful in doing so—perhaps somewhat mitigates this irony, but not totally.

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5. Totality within the bounds of reason alone

Neither Locke's exegetical findings (which despite his commitment to reading "St. Paul Himself" are much assisted by the prior work of Beza, Grotius, Hammond, Lightfoot, and Mede, among others)[387] nor his hermeneutical procedure (which is influenced by Maimonides, Lodewijk Meijer, and, as mentioned, Spinoza) is finally all that original.[388] But Locke's aspiration, to paint his ideas in accordance with Paul's own ideas—to boldly and centrally interject this new hermeneutic domain, Paul's mind, into the process of interpretation—certainly *is* revolutionary.

[386] *Paraphrase,* 115.
[387] *Paraphrase,* 692.
[388] Nadler, 124.

Locke has been cast by Jonathan Israel and others as part of a strain of compromised enlightenment thought—adapting the radical insights of Spinoza, d'Holbach, and others to the practical and ultimately half-democratic aims of magisterial state management. There is certainly something to this argument; my work here has, it must be clear, helped add detail to this thesis.[389] At the same, time, though, Locke's contribution to the shape of enlightenment is far from peripheral. He is a crucial figure for articulating what I have repeatedly emphasized as a key feature of enlightenment discourse—not its commitment to scientific materialism, but its commitment to intermodality, to the notion that there are separate spheres of validity impinging upon the world that need to be at once differentiated and at the same time interpreted according to a prevailing paradigm of reason.

Locke accomplishes this through his emphasis on the domain of language use. Language, for Locke, at once differentiates things and ideas and brings them into common circulation. This double action of distinction and communication is indispensible to both his semiotics and hermeneutics. Spinoza, despite the "hylozoic monism" so admired by Israel, in many ways remains within the Adamic perspective on the universe—in which all things must be understood as always already existing within the mind of God. We participate in a larger logos. We bring God's thoughts into actuality—but not in any actually free manner. We are spoken by the ineffable word of God—of Nature—of what is. For Locke, on the contrary, the mind is a region at once free from actual determination and also constrained, through words, by convention. It is the seat of an intermodal struggle or conversation between natural, subjective, and social elements. Locke perhaps intends this as what we might call a conservative gesture—as a means of quenching the rhetorical fire of those called enthusiasts and preserving the legitimacy of the

[389] See Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

state—but the implications of the idea he pursues to make this gesture, the arbitrary word, far exceed any such local political efforts.[390]

One can see Locke as continuing the work of the Cambridge Platonists—of limiting and balancing enthusiastic totalities within a larger system. But he does this in a different way. Henry More puts on and takes off philosophical totalities quite carelessly, switching between explanatory modes without ever really hammering down his reasons for choosing one mode rather than another. His totalities are, as we've said, provisional and partial. Their relation to the doctrinal core More sees himself as defending is somewhat undefined. They might be envisioned as temporary stylizations of the theological whole—brief departures from reason. Locke arranges his logically consistent totalities differently. They are rooted in some fundamental aspect of creation. The material dimension of reality is that which can be known all the way down only by the Creator. The experiential dimension is that node of associations unique and exclusive to each mind. Totalities are, for Locke, *dimensions* rather than excursions. If, for More, knowledge can be pictured as a series of stylizations centered on reasons, for Locke, it can be pictured as a carefully divided triad—things in themselves, subjective experiences, and conventional meanings—centered on the capacity of language-using creatures to provide reasons for their beliefs.

Again this way of combining totalities is pitted directly against—and thus modeled in distinction to—the idea of enthusiasm. The problem with enthusiasts, from Locke's point-of-view, is not that they claim spiritual authority unto themselves, but that they ask others, without reason, to respect that authority too. By abandoning reason—in the sense that they refuse to give

[390] This might be due in part to Locke's English context. Whereas Spinoza, for instance, articulates his radical hermeneutics against Reformed Calvinists who might be thought of as the seventeenth-century equivalent of conservative fundamentalists, who cast "human fabrications as divine teachings" in order to seize and hold political power, Locke is just as concerned with totally unlicensed thinkers, which we might perhaps imagine as the seventeen-century equivalent of anarchists, who want to dissolve state authority altogether and prepare the world for an utterly stateless eschaton. Locke is concerned in a way that Spinoza is not with understanding and accounting for the form of private faith, of inner light, of reason. Thus he gets behind the question of whether scripture is written by God or humans, behind questions of theological doctrine, and examines the tissue of doctrine – words – as it interacts with the tissue of sense experience—ideas. He is not perhaps the first to have done this. But he is perhaps the first to have done it so thoroughly and rigorously.

reasons to others for what they claim, to explain *why* they have special authority, *what* that authority consists of, etc.—enthusiasts abandon any claim to such authority. As Locke puts it:

> Here it is that *Enthusiasm* fails of the Evidence it pretends to. For Men thus possessed boast of a Light whereby they say, they are enlightened, and brought into the Knowledge of this or that Truth. But if they know it to be a Truth, they must know it to be so either by its own self-evidence to natural Reason; or by the rational Proofs that make it out to be so. If they see and know it to be a Truth, either of these two ways, they in vain suppose it to be a Revelation: For they know it to be true by the same way, that any other Man naturally may know, that it is so without the help of Revelation. For thus all the Truths of what kind soever, that Men uninspired are enlightened with, came into their Minds, and are established there. If they say they know it to be true, because it is a *Revelation* from GOD, the reason is good: but then it will be demanded, how they know it to be a Revelation from GOD. If they say by the Light it brings with it, which shines bright in their Minds, and they cannot resist; I beseech them to consider, whether this be any more, than what we have taken notice of already, *viz.* For all the Light they speak of is but a strong, though ungrounded perswasion of their own Minds that it is a Truth.[391]

For Locke, authority can only come through reason, because only through reasons can we communicate across the otherwise impassable divide that separates unique minds, formed from unique sense experiences, with unique (although they shouldn't be) definitions of complex terms—terms able to rile up, more because of the obscurity than the clarity of the ideas they convey, violent passions. Enthusiasts, in Locke's definition, ask for an audience to take them at their word without any further interrogation. They ask for faith. But God's revelation proceeds through reasons.

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[391] *Essay,* 4.19.11.

Language, then, is the basis of Locke's counter-enthusiasm—and of what we might call a subsequent liberal enthusiasm, focused on the intersubjective role of language in linking otherwise isolated subjectivities at once to the natural world and to the thoughts and reasons of the other.

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6. Lockean rationalization and enlightenment

This chapter has devoted most of its space to reading *with* Locke—to unpacking his theories of signification and hermeneutics as they bear on the seventeenth-century crisis of spiritual authority which gives rise to the discourse of enthusiasm. That said, it is certainly possible to read him less generously than I have here.[392] Above all, readers surely ought not to pretend that Locke can get away with relying on reason for every point in his philosophy *except*, apparently, the existence of God. He asks in his epistemology a that special and unique status be afforded to God—a "Real Existence" which is beyond reasonable interrogation.[393] Similarly, Locke asks us in his exegeses of the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles to grant the revealed nature of the scriptures—a point which he appears willing to doubt himself at points in the *Essay*, as when he suggests that accepting the miraculous status of scripture *itself* requires a miracle (i.e., one must be oneself inspired to know that these particular words were inspired).[394] Locke's Socinian reputation, and his influence on Deism, are both, of course, well known from the work of John Marshall and others.[395] And a modern reader will have little trouble finding, as did the Bishop Stillingfleet, many points in the *Essay* that appear to undermine religious authority. I have

[392] For instance, Locke betrays, in many ways, some subtle, some central, the marks of an emerging bourgeois perspective on the world. It's not an accident—though he nowhere registers his own awareness of this significance—that he chooses gold as the object of his investigations of substance. Nor is it an accident that the mixed modes his Adam coins name a husband's suspicion of a wife's infidelity and the crime of infidelity itself. For a classic—but also deeply contested—account of Locke's role in establishing the theoretical bourgeois individual, see C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962). For a classic account of his role in establishing bourgois patriarchy, see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 91-94.
[393] *Essay,* 4.1.7.
[394] *Essay,* 4.18.6.
[395] Marshall, *Resistance.*

not emphasized these fissures in Locke's work, not because I don't think they're there, but because I find that they are compatible with the hermeneutics constitutive of the emergence of rationalization in response to the pressure of the question of enthusiasm. In this sense, they comprise certain persistent contradictions in post-enthusiastic arrangements of subject, self, and nature—which Locke, in his political theology, attempts, heroically but imperfectly, to harmonize.

There has been a scholarly tendency in the last thirty years has been to deemphasize Locke as the spearhead of enlightenment and instead locate enlightenment in longer arcs of secularity. Scholars have emphasized a consistency of enlightenment—a devotion to republican, atheist, materialist principles. Thus the Machiavelli-Hobbes-Spinoza enlightenment articulated, albeit in brilliant and carefully differentiated ways, by J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner; and the related "Low Countries first" view of enlightenment advocated, again in quite different ways, by the historians Margaret Jacobs and Jonathan Israel.[396] One might add that Leo Strauss is a complementary advocate of this broad historical view, although instead of endorsing the most consistently secular thinkers as the bearers of this tradition he argues that those who seem inconsistent—such as Locke, who is a sort of *locus classicus* for Strauss' thesis—were not, in reality. They were atheists. They were secularists. But they were forced to hide these views and code them in their writings—which were designed to be read one way by the masses, and another way by the learned few.[397]

I hope the work of this chapter has been to complement rather than dismiss this work, which has been so long dominant for a reason. I do hope to relocate Locke to the beginning of what we call enlightenment—but not out of any simple celebratory impulse. I find that his contradictions define him, and define the subsequent movement to which our social

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[396] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); See the discussion of Israel in the Epilogue below.
[397] See the discussion of Strauss in Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought From Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Verso, 2011), 5 ff.

arrangements owe so much. One can see in Locke, more clearly perhaps than in any other thinker considered in this project, the characteristic turn of enlightenment at once toward rationalization and toward a new sort of intermodality. He separates the parts of discourse. And yet they come together, quite literally in eschatological twists, at his beginnings and ends. In this rhythm of rationalization and intermodality, in which the strands of the rope of modernity are pulled apart, examined, and twisted back together, is the deep rhythm of scholarly practice, of institutional self-examination, and perhaps of life within capitalism—where, much like Locke's language user one is at once an autonomous Adam capable of self-definition, and one of the myriad children of Adam born into old and deep systems of conventional signification. One is both an arbiter and subject to arbitration. This is also, of course, the rhythm of crisis—of the moment when the separate parts of production, abstracted and differentiated as autonomous parts, smack back into one another—recognizing, horror-struck, that they are not differentiated at all, but absolutely interdependent.

I don't mean to drift too far from the point at hand—though it is important, I think, to suggest the breadth of the implications of what might seem like a quite recondite chapter in intellectual history: the relation of Locke's theory of signification to his theory of hermeneutics. I hope finally to suggest that Locke's arbitrary word, which (as Aarsleff knows and shows) he bequeaths to the dominant strain of subsequent linguistic theory, is created in a profound struggle with the problem of popular spiritual authority enabled by an essentialist understanding of the Adamic word. The marks of Locke's bias are still very much with us. They can be heard, I wish to suggest—and as I have addressed more fully in my introduction—in the rejections of essentialism, and the celebrations of performativity, that dominate the academic discourse concerning language. Cautiously, fully aware of the compromises involved in this line of thinking, it is worth investigating further the degree to which radical political positions, and meaningful political change, have been associated with what we might call "essentialist" attitudes toward

language—where words are felt to convey a power all their own, at once dependent on speakers and their situations and reaching beyond that particular voice to a—at least perceived—larger truth communicable to a larger audience. And likewise, it is worth considering the degree to which a determined insistence on contextualizing meaning, on pinning it to particular persons in particular situations, has been part of a larger effort, visible from the long view of history, to silence popular voices as soon as they learn and speak the vocabulary of power in terms of which, for centuries, they have been defined.

…the Poet shall be burlesque'd upon with his own doggrel ryhms…

. - Erasmus[398]

1. A Woman's Hair

Following Jonathan Swift's death in 1745, a strange object was found in a drawer of his writing desk—an envelope, on which was written, "Only a woman's hair."[399] Tucked inside was, as advertised, a lock of hair. Swift's biographers, from Walter Scott forward, have assumed that the lock belonged to Esther Johnson, known from her correspondence with Swift as Stella, with whom he had a lifelong, enigmatic, not-quite romance.[400] Scott, in first publishing this anecdote, wrote: "If Stella was dead, as is most probable, when Swift laid apart this memorial, the motto is an additional instance of his striving to veil the most bitter feelings under the guise of cynical indifference."[401]

Following Scott's publication of the anecdote, many have latched on to this image of Swift's movingly failed cynicism. But in doing so, they tend to bring out an aspect of the memento Scott doesn't emphasize: its more general religious significance. For example, when Eyre Crowe, the German-British historical painter, exhibited at the Royal Arts Academy a widely admired portrait of the bereaved Swift inscribing the envelope, he paired it with a depiction of Luther nailing the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, as though marking two milestones in the privatization of faith.[402] And in a rapturous poem titled, "Only a Woman's Hair," Lewis Carroll compared Swift's "relic" to the hair of the woman who kisses and anoints Jesus'

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[398] Desiderius Erasmus, *Witt against wisdom, or, A panegyrick upon folly penn'd in Latin by Desiderius Erasmus; render'd into English* (1683). *EEBO*.
[399] See Leo Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 409.
[400] Though Damrosch points out that it might also have belonged to the other Esther in Swift's ambiguous love life – Esther "Vanessa" Vanhomrigh. See Damrosch, 409.
[401] Walter Scott, *Memoirs of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* (1824), 239.
[402] I learned about Eyre Crowe's paintings of Swift through the webpage dedicated to Crowe built and maintained by Kathryn Summerwill. See eyrecrowe.com/pictures/1860s/dean-swift-looking-at-a-lock-of-stellas-hair/

feet with ointment in the Gospel of Luke: "And still she bathes the sacred feet with tears, / And wipes them with her hair."[403]

"Only a woman's hair." Surely not *only*. I want to suggest, with Crowe and Carroll, that this moment is an example of a conspicuously failed desire to despiritualize—or, if you prefer Max Weber's term, to disenchant—the material traces of his deceased friend. The phrase seems to want to reduce Stella—and, by extension, "woman," and perhaps "the human"—to mere matter, and at the same time, it seems to want to be seen failing to rid this private human residue of the spirit that haunts it. In appearing to attempt to wring from this relic its significance, Swift draws this significance out. This is the torque of the inscription. It is a conspicuously failed attempt at materialist reduction, which captures something more than material about the object of its conspicuous failure.

And this, I will suggest in this chapter, is one quality, beneath and beyond his more obvious anti-sectarian engagements, that Swift brings to the discourse of enthusiasm. I will argue in this chapter that Swift has two approaches to enthusiasm. Both are what we could call satirical. That is, both depend upon the effects of literary irony, and both exploit the gap, at once obvious and famously enigmatic in Swift's work, between his personae (the range of anonymous and pseudonymous fools, gulls, wise men, conmen, and so on, that he inhabits in his writings) and his person, Dean Swift of St. Patrick's, Dublin.[404] But these two satirical modes do very different things. The first, which I will call his polemical satire of enthusiasm, works through travesty. That is, it works through undermining, in various ingenious ways, the dignity of the enthusiasts who

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[403] Lewis Carroll, *The Complete Stories and Poems of Lewis Carroll* (London: Gramercy), 343.

[404] The issue of how Swift uses personae is one of the most deeply argued in Swift scholarship. At the same time, it is largely concerned with one issue: whether one can reliably distinguish between the views of Swift the person and those of the literary personae he adapts. In my view, this focus avoids the role of Swift's larger polemical context, and so misses the particular force of his enthusiastic imitations. For the most important coordinates in this debate, see Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," *Yale Review*, 41 (1951), 80-92; Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Personae," in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Essays in Honor of Alan Dugald McKillop* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 25-37; Robert C. Elliott, "Swift's I," *Yale Review*, 62 (1973): 372-91; Howard Weinbrot, "Masked Men and Satire and Pope: Toward a Historical Basis for the Eighteenth-Century Persona," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 16 (1983): 265-89; Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

are the objects of his satire. We will see a few of examples of this—largely drawn from *A Tale of a Tub*, his astonishing early satirical allegory of Christian history, and the brilliantly engineered literary hoax known as the *Bickerstaff Papers*, which I argue should be read as a sequel to the *Tale*, extending his polemical travesty of enthusiasm from the virtual fields of literature to actual social reality. The second mode, which is perhaps more unexpected, but which I want to claim is ultimately just as important for understanding Swift and his place in the literary history of secularization, I will call Swift's prophetic satire of enthusiasm. This satire, like the polemical, operates through the ironic inhabitation of personae. But it works not to travesty the object of satire—however much it appears to want to do this—but to transfigure this object. In this second satirical mode, irony creates a space for ineffable connection between author, reader, and text, on the basis of a conspicuous failure to despiritualize the object around which these rhetorical positions are situated. In the terms we have used so far in this study, this second form of satire is thus intermodal—concerned with the mixing and balancing of emphases or stresses within the complex act of signifying.

It is worth laying out what I mean by this in some detail at the outset. We have seen how Henry More's approach to enthusiasm ultimately finds purchase in the question of where the body—or, more generally, abstract embodiment—is located in the theorization of the word. More projects through the figure of the enthusiast an allegory of language that locates incarnation with the prophetic utterer—the speaker or writer of demotic prophecy—rather than with the historical Incarnation of Jesus, the divine word made human flesh. He proposes to restore this divine word to the center of language, and to conceive of proper language users—that is, true Christians—as participating mindfully and transparently in this miracle rather than idolatrously recreating it in their own immanent speech situations. Locke, two decades later and equally responsive to the problems of enthusiasm as he sees them, takes a different approach to the situation of embodiment vis-à-vis language. On one hand, he reframes the enthusiastic centrality

of the utterer pathologized by More, arguing that each speaker or writer retains the Adamic right to coin new words. Locke thus prefers to recognize the centrality of the first rather than the second Adam in the counter-enthusiastic theorization of language. But he maintains that, given one's inevitably recent situation in the long line of language coiners, this should be understood as a trivial rather than a significant charism. Further, he distinguishes—with unprecedented precision and revolutionary consequences—between two major categories of words. Some words represent mixed modes—that is, complex associations of things; in these cases, the significant body must be understood as the first coiner of a given mixture, the first person to put together, say, the notions of "murder" and "father" and coin the word "parricide." Other words represent approximate understandings of the properties of natural objects which are not yet (and perhaps can never be) plumbed to the bottom; in such cases, the significant body is the natural object itself, known in full only to the creator of all things. Thus Locke distributes embodiment—significant incarnation—between physical nature and conventional society, with some words tethered to the one, and other words to the other sphere.

Swift, as we will see, does something quite different. Once again, he proposes a retheorization of signification that is centrally responsive to the problems of enthusiasm. Once again, this retheorization displays the signature double structure of the discourse of enthusiasm in general: it refutes enthusiasts with one hand while engineering viable versions of their purportedly radical views with the other. But he solves the problem of enthusiasm in a very different manner than either More or Locke. Put simply, he prefers ironies to reasons. In his polemical satire of enthusiasm, he displays an awareness of the dependent structure of counter-enthusiastic rationalists on so-called enthusiastic radicals—and in this display of awareness finds a new polemical weapon in the struggle to change and fix prophetic signification. He thus centers the significance of the discourse of enthusiasm not in the doctrinal battle of dissenting utterer and Incarnate Word, or in a semiotic distinction between social convention and natural physics,

but in the author's virtuosic ability both to be and not to be a signifying body—both to speak with a clarity rivaling divinity, and to disappear into pseudonymity, irony, and silence. In his prophetic satire, then, he exploits the ironies inherent to written (rather than spoken) expression, floating the prophetic body, as it were, between the contrary-pulling forces of text, reader, and author. To rely once more on the vocabulary of rationalization and language, he transposes into a new discursive register the epistemological-ontological distinction of self, thing, and other which (as I have argued) is a central upshot of the reaction to popular prophetic authority. He invites you to join him on this plane of indeterminate signification—partly as a polemical strategy of diversion (so that you won't do something awful like propose some new project for fixing the ills of church, state, or society), and partly for the spectral company.

I will further suggest that in this second form of the satire of enthusiasm—the prophetic satire—Swift offers a valuable model for what Talal Asad and others have invited us to call "post-secularity," though my chapter will further suggest, as Asad does too, that the "post" in that conceptual formation is an overstatement, as enlightenment literary affects and genres such as those stemming from Swift have always been profoundly invested in retaining a space for what we might call ineffability—a space for transfiguration.

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2. Becoming the Enthusiast

But first, it is important to account briefly for some of the tectonic shifts in the discourse of enthusiasm between Locke and Swift. We have seen in the discussion of the Cambridge Platonists in Chapter Three how the counter-enthusiastic project of despiritualization, designed to preserve spiritual authority from base usurpers, finds a conceptual ally in a provisional materialism that they might at once project outward through the philosophical enthusiast's eyes—declaring various thinkers and schools to be Epicurean materialists—and at the same time project into political enthusiasts' humoral psychology—declaring various disestablishment

movements symptomatic of disordered spleens. We have seen that Locke abandons this emphasis on the humors, instead focusing on the theory of language that empowers enthusiastic language—the Adamic theory of the word. He concedes that present speakers participate in Adam's spiritual gift of naming, but he spreads this gift so thin that it ceases to mean anything special in any given case. In other words, in order to rob enthusiasts of their prophetic power, he proposes that everyone is potentially an enthusiast—and that enthusiasts are merely headstrong or bullying ordinary language users, who either lazily believe that the voices in their heads come from God, or invent such voices in order to manipulate others.

Both of these counter-enthusiasts thus model themselves on those they wish to diagnose as dangerous and deranged: they provisionally adapt materialism and universalize Adamism. But, crucially, they also assiduously reserve a place for true religion which enthusiasm cannot touch. More emphasizes the historical reality of the Incarnation. Locke defends the core message of the Gospels. They imagine their counter-enthusiastic philosophies as defending the heart of Christianity from demotic incursions. At the same time, on the whole, given that a doctrinally minimalist Protestantism dominated the Established Church of England for the next two centuries (albeit flexing now toward dissenting, now toward Catholic spirituality), it seems as though these efforts and the similar efforts of many broadly like-minded counter-enthusiastic theological philosophers were not in vain.[405]

However, the ironic appropriative nature of counter-enthusiasm—namely, the degree to which counter-enthusiasms adapt the positions they appear to be dismissing—did not pass unnoticed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the decades between the publication of Locke's *Essay* and Swift's *Tale*, this observation becomes increasingly important. As already mentioned, the enthusiasms of Henry More are almost proverbial in the decades

[405] For an excellent account of Locke's theology and its long influence, see Nicholas Woltersdorff, "Locke's Philosophy of Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, edited by Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 172-198.

following his own era—as Shaftesbury puts it in 1709, More "was perhaps as great an Enthusiast as any of those, whom he wrote against"—and his balancing of enthusiasm and anti-enthusiasm remains a common starting point for intellectual historians contemplating his legacy.[406] Locke's affiliation with enthusiasm is less well-known today—but it was widely debated, if often in proxy terms, during the very early eighteenth century, when the question of the degree to which his thought might be secretly Socinian (that is, Unitarian or at least non-Trinitarian), or might have encouraged the open Socianian Deism of writers like John Toland and Anthony Collins (who openly professed admiration for Locke's philosophy and were indeed closely acquainted with him personally) engaged, most famously, Bishop Stillingfleet's careful attention, and prompted much speculation beyond that well-known correspondence.[407] Anti-Trinitarianisms—whether Socinian, Deist, or of another sort—are often considered views very much opposed to enthusiasm. Where the one is cold, the other is warm; where the one is overly rational, the other is overly emotional; etc. But while to a large degree this contrast is true of Continental Catholic considerations of the contrast—which are frequently comfortable opposing a true enthusiasm, wherein reason is subject to faith, to a Socinianism destructive of all religion—English counter-enthusiasms generally see the two as foundationally linked.[408] We've seen how central this connection is to

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406 [Anon.], *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University* (London, 1716), Letter IX, December 30, 1709, p. 43. Quoted in Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), 214. For critical accounts emphasizing More's enthusiasm, see Allison Courdert, "Henry More and Witchcraft," and Robert Crocker, "Mysticism and Enthusiasm in Henry More," both in Sarah Hutton, ed., *Henry More (1614-1687): Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers), 115-156. See also Daniel Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More: Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997), passim.

407 As John Milner puts it in 1700, "It is well known, that some have publickly, in plain and express Words, charged *Socinianism* upon Mr. *Lock;* and that others conceive that there is too much reason to suspect that he is leaven'd with many of the Doctrines of *Socinus,* and his Followers." See Milner, *An account of Mr. Lock's religion, out of his own writings, and in his own words together with some observations upon it, and a twofold appendix : I. a specimen of Mr. Lock's way of answering authors ..., II. a brief enquiry whether Socinianism be justly charged upon Mr. Lock* (London, 1700), 179. Woolhouse covers the Locke-Stillingfleet exchange quite thoroughly—and draws out a number of implications that are relevant to this study, above all the fact that Stillingfleet and Locke were in basic disagreement about the status of words vis-à-vis minds, with Locke arguing that words are "reserved for the understanding" and Stillingfleet insisting that they must have corresponding objects in nature. See 400 ff.

408 For an example of the continental defense of a minimal enthusiasm against Socinianism, see H.C. de Luzancy, *A conference between an orthodox Christian and a Socinian in four dialogues: wherein the late distinction of a real and nominal Trinitarian is considered* (London, 1698), 120 ff. For a clear and thorough example of the English conflation of Socinianism and enthusiasm, see Francis Fullwood, *A parallel wherein it appears that the Socinian agrees with the papist, if not exceeds him in*

More's counter-enthusiasm—particularly in its final formulation in the *Explanation*—which is finally premised on the enthusiast's denial of the Incarnation and hence his self-idolatry. In this context, considerations of Locke's Socinianism carried suggestions that this thinker, too, was potentially an enthusiast.

My point is finally quite simple. Those who opposed enthusiasm on philosophical grounds tempted others to accuse them of being themselves enthusiasts. (And this is true not only of English thinkers like Hobbes, More, and Locke, but—even more so—of French counter-enthusiasts like Descartes and Malebranche.)[409] There are a number of reasons for this. Enthusiasm was, as discussed in my first two chapters, a powerful polemical term. Most basically, "enthusiast" was thrown around much like "communist," "fascist," "reactionary," "terrorist," and other treason-denoting terms in similarly heated discourses of recent centuries, as an unanswerable smear largely independent of any particular context—even while responsive to deeply meaningful structural anxieties regarding legitimation and authority. But beyond its polemical usefulness, the discourse of enthusiasm operated largely via the provisional imitation of the enthusiastic target. Effective counter-enthusiasms abandon the heresy paradigm and accept the idea that the problem called enthusiasm—unlicensed hermeneutic access to the legitimating source of worldly authority—is not going back into Pandora's box. In order to defeat this particular threat, one had to indulge it—become it, generalize it, historicize it, situate it into a newly sharpened epistemology distinguishing self, others, and nature, and, in general, take it as an occasion for the redescription of the basic parameters of human nature. This is not to say, of course, that one had to actually believe what a Familist or Quaker or Baptist believed. But one had to loop one's theory of rationality through a figure generalized from these sectarian examples,

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idolatry, antiscripturism and fanaticism (1693), 24-28. See also Heyd, 234, for a discussion of the ways in which Shaftesbury inspired conservative polemics to link deism and enthusiasm.

[409] For a good summary of Descartes' reputation as an enthusiast, see Heyd, 107-44. Malebranche, as a Cartesian, shared this reputation—and indeed for many expanded it. Malebranche's example prompted William Molyneux to ask Locke to add a chapter on philosophical enthusiasm to the *Essay*, which he subsequently did in the fourth edition of 1700. See Molyneux to Locke, April 18, 1693, in de Beer.

a figure comprised of the common elements of Familist-ness, Quaker-ness, Baptist-ness, etc. One had to project through this abstract heretic of heretics a new common reasonableness comfortable with and conformable to legitimate authority. One had to know—and hence, provisionally, to become—not any given enthusiast, but *the enthusiast*.

For the philosophical discourse of enthusiasm, then, there is a danger—even a necessity—of self-replication. The hunter becomes the game. But for Jonathan Swift, to whom we now return, this danger is recast as a literary advantage. He embraces enthusiasm's viral nature—proliferating its capacity to proliferate itself. This is the essence of his polemical satire of enthusiasm—his travestying satire.

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3. Swift's Travestying Satire

By way of introducing at once the subject and the effect of Swift's polemical satire of enthusiasm, consider the following summary from Marcus Walsh's recent edition of the *Tale*:

> In all of Swift's anti-sectarian satire the major target is enthusiasm, the fallacious claim to the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit: visions, prophecies, a Pentecostal Babel of languages, delusive claims to inspiration and inward illumination, driven by winds and airs, hydraulic and pneumatic promptings mostly from below, to which the minds and bodies of the zealot, male and especially female, are well adapted and receptive.[410]

[410] Jonathan Swift, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: A Tale of a Tub and Other Works,* edited by Marcus Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), lxviii. As Walsh suggests, the *Tale* has frequently been read as participating in longer arcs of heresiography and anti-sectarian polemic, often (as with the more general treatments of the question of Swift's personae mentioned above) with the intention of discerning the author's own confessional commitments. For representative scholarship on this question, see Phillip Harth, *Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of "A Tale of a Tub"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Donald Greene, "The Via Media in an Age of Revolution: Anglicanism in the Eighteenth Century," in Peter Hughes and David Williams, eds., *The Varied Pattern: Studies in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1971), 297-320; Terry Castle, "Why the Houhyhnms don't Write: Swift, Satire, and the Fear of the Text," *Essays in Literature* 7 (1980): 31-44; Marcus Walsh, "Text, 'Text' and Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*," *Modern Language Review* 85 (1990): 290-303. Castle and Walsh represent starkly opposing views on the question of whether or not the *Tale* undermines the authority of the Bible, with Castle arguing that it does and Walsh that it does not. Clement Hawes, in *Mania and Literary Style*, emphasizes Swift's engagement with enthusiasm as it relates to class politics—in his phrase, "plebian vapors"—in a way that anticipates the present argument but without raising the question of the relation of spirit and body in the discourse of enthusiasm. See Hawes, 101 ff.

For those who haven't read the *Tale* lately, Walsh's remarks call to mind Section VIII, where the *Tale*-teller departs from the story's main thread to describe the "Learned *Æolists*," that is, devotees of the wind god, Aeolus, who literally puff each other full of "Spirit," in the form of sour and mucus-intincted belches.[411] This is an outrageous send-up of those—mostly, again, Quakers—who claim to know God through the movement of spirit. What I want to notice, however, is not so much Walsh's basic claim (that enthusiasm is central to Swift's anti-sectarian satire, which is certainly correct) but the way he makes it. He begins close to what we might call facts. The enthusiast claims "the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit" including access to "visions" and "prophecies." He then veers nearer to polemic. The enthusiast speaks "a Pentecostal Babel of languages." And finally he simply reproduces directly the *Tale*'s satirical etiology of enthusiasm: the "winds and airs," the "hydraulic and pneumatic promptings mostly from below," the bodily receptiveness of the "zealot, male and especially female." In the course of one long sentence, Walsh has allowed Swift to ventriloquize him—to steer his attention from the theological subject at hand to the array of comic-materialist vehicles Swift uses both to figure and to undermine that subject—hydraulic promptings, winds and airs, and so on. I don't mean to suggest that Walsh doesn't know that there's a difference between Swift's enthusiasts and the actual Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers whom Swift was sending up. Of course he does. But I would submit that he likely doesn't much care. Like so many readers of the *Tale*, he prefers Swift's Aeolist's to history's Quakers.

This is the way that Swift's polemical satire of enthusiasm tends to work. He recognizes that enthusiasm is less a theological category or medical condition than a circuit of allusions reinforced by generic expectations which can be turned to advantage. In other words, he recognizes that—however assiduous thinkers like More and Locke have been in taxonomizing

411 *Tale*, 99

and situating the enthusiast in larger philosophical considerations of ontology and epistemology—enthusiasm is already, and in a sense *always has been*, a literary strategy.

And like all literary forms, the discourse of enthusiasm is rooted in what we might call a common illusion of reality. We have discussed the role of the discourse of enthusiasm in shifting this common illusion—largely through changing the common understanding of the mediating role of language in the understanding of the categories of self, society, and nature. The figure of the enthusiast inspires a new social theory of language. Enthusiasts are variously depicted as those who have no control over their language (who are thus at the mercy of their disordered physiology, having surrendered their human right to reason), as those who control others through their language (using rhetorical fascination to overcome people's stable sense of reality), as those who believe implicitly that their own bodies are the final signified in the allegory of language (as More argues), as those who treat their ordinary inheritance of the Adamic gift of naming as though it marks them as special vessels of divine news (as Locke argues). They jumble self, group, and natural world—and demonstrate the necessity of clarifying these categories. To put my account plainly: 1) the vernacular Bible and lay hermeneut represent real threat to the feudal legitimation schema; 2) the figure of the enthusiast is cobbled from heresiological, medical, philosophical, and literary sources to understand, manage, and appropriate this threat; 3) in so doing, the enthusiast helps facilitate—or, better, helps bring to early bud—the distinction of validity domains central to the process called rationalization.

The weak point in this process is clearly the second—in which the enthusiast plays a role between fact and fiction, history and fantasy. Those called enthusiasts, as we've seen, strongly object to the label, claiming that they are being misrepresented, made into irrational monsters, and so on, when they are in fact perfectly aware of what they are about, and perfectly consistent with Christian theology—indeed, much more consistent than the establishment figures whose

power allegedly depends on taking such theology seriously.[412] And of course they are right to level these claims. The enthusiast *is* a monstrous, fictional, polysemous abstraction, not, say, a Quaker (itself already a polemicized term for a member of the Society of Friends), let alone any given Quaker. In hindsight, writing from an era when the theological insights of the Society of Friends have been adapted by Catholics, Anglicans, etc., this is only too obvious.

Swift recognizes this weakness and, rather than avoid it (as Locke does) or justify it (as More does), pours everything he has into it. Thus his polemical satire assumes a relationship to that common reality such that, carefully managed, it avoids counter-enthusiasm's philosophical problems while realizing counter-enthusiasm's polemical aims. More misrepresents Quakers and (as we saw in the Introduction) Anne Conway objects. But Swift cannot possibly misrepresent Aeolists. Instead of even attempting to hook his polemic up with the empirical world, as it were, he sticks to virtuality, representing an enthusiastic narrator representing a ludicrous sect of enthusiasts. Thus he overcomes—even embraces—the contradiction in the provisional inhabitation of philosophical enthusiasm in order to combat political enthusiasm. Swift recasts the philosophical enthusiast as the author position itself, and the political enthusiast as the subject of his satire. He makes the discourse of enthusiasm *about* the problems of representation, and he leverages a new sort of authority from the ironic communication of this metageneric awareness.

For example, consider this passage from the satire of the Aeolists in *A Tale of a Tub*. This is one of the digressions in the *Tale*, during which the narrator—himself a self-confessed Epicurean Atomist (that is, in More's terms, a philosophical enthusiast)—travesties the Aeolist's claims to divine inspiration:

> [S]ome Authors maintain these *Æolists* to have been very anctent in the World. Because, the Delivery of their Mysteries, which I have just now mention'd, appears exactly the same with that of other antient Oracles, whose Inspirations were owing

[412] See Keith.

> to certain subterraneous *Effluviums* of *Wind* delivered with the *same* Pain to the Priest [i.e. the priest receives the effluvium through the bowels], and much about the *same* Influence on the People. It is true indeed, that these were frequently managed and directed by *Female* Officers, whose Organs were understood to be better disposed for the Admission of those Oracular *Gusts*, as entering and passing up through a Receptacle of greater Capacity, and causing also a Pruriency by the Way, such as with due Management, has been refined from Carnal into a Spiritual Exstasie.[413]

A few obvious features of Swift's approach here are worth pointing out. First, he travesties all claims to spiritual authority, refusing to associate his objects with the Bible (or even, as John Taylor did in his earlier *Tale of a Tub*, with the apocrypha) and instead paganizing them. He thus immediately casts them as false prophets. Further, he grotesquely feminizes the Aeolists—and this is usually taken to be a mockery of Quakers. But there is more than one sort of allusion going on here. As the discussion in Chapter Two has helped prepare, Swift is far from the first to introduce these paganizing and feminizing strains to the discourse. They are there for instance in More: "*Enthusiasts* for the most part are intoxicated with vapours from the lowest region of their Body, as the *Pythia* of old are conceived to have been inspired through the power of certain exhalations breathed from those caverns they had their recess in."[414] And in fact one can trace this comparison back further. A particularly grotesque example appears, for example, in Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563), a work famous for arguing (in a striking prefiguration of the discourse of enthusiasm) that what were called witches should be thought of instead as melancholiacs:

> [I]n one way only did the demon issue his pronouncements from the Pythian women at Delphi: from the private parts, after the thighs had been spread apart. Indeed Tertullian, an author of the utmost gravity, affirms that he saw women

[413] *Tale*, 102.
[414] *ET,* 28.

'belly-talkers,' from whose pudenda (as they remained seated) a small voice was stirred which responded to the questioners.[415]

From Swift to More to Weyer to Tertullian—a tissue of allusions and references supports this heresiographical chain of false prophets, feminine and material, pagan and idolatrous, promiscuously open to the earth, ventriloquized—and ventriloquism means, literally, "belly-talking"—by the swirling vapors of nature.[416]

Swift's innovation, as a participant in this long counter-prophetic chain of references, is to admit—to confess indirectly—that his own voice too is a textual ventriloquization. Where earlier authors are at pains to insist upon the earnestness and seriousness of their testimonials, Swift's narrator constantly signals his unreliability—his enthusiasm. "The delivery of their mysteries," he insists, "appears exactly the same with that of other ancient oracles." And in this "exactly" one feels the force of an enthusiastic discovery. Everything is connected. The Aeolists are exactly like the Quakers are exactly like the Witches are exactly like the Sybils are exactly like the Aeolists. This is the lure of philosophical enthusiasm—to discover, with Mr. Casaubon, the key to all mythologies. And, as I've suggested, it's the Achilles heel of the official discourse of enthusiasm—that in order to diagnose one sort of enthusiasm, one must entertain another. In order to call out a false prophet, one must insist that oneself is a true prophet. Swift finds a way around this problem. He reproduces philosophical enthusiasm not unconsciously, not despite himself, but purposefully, noticing and reinforcing its resonance with the general problem of authorial reliability. Thus he finds an ironic backdoor to the representation of authorial sanity. Swift wants us to recognize that he wants us to recognize that his narrator is a lunatic.

Swift's polemical, travestying satire, in short, totally refuses to play the game of spiritual authority toe-to-toe with his opponents. He doesn't care about the facticity or falsity of their

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[415] Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance*, a translation of *De praestigiis daemonum*, trans. John Shea, ed. George Moral and Benjamin Kohl (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), 142.
[416] For an excellent account of ventriloquism, see Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

actual claims. He doesn't care about the facticity or falsity of *his* actual claims. He creates a new form of polemical authority through the force of authorial self-awareness. His persona confesses his own enthusiasm—and in so confessing, distinguishes itself as a front for a perspective worthy of the reader's trust.

These confessions of philosophical enthusiasm are quite clear in the text. The narrator regularly alludes to himself as a Lucretian Modern.[417] He charmingly admits this at a number of points, as when he writes, "I my self, the Author of these momentous Truths, am a Person, whose imaginations are hard-mouth'd, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his *Reason,* which I have observed from long Experience, to be a very light Rider, and easily shook off."[418] Of course the philosophical enthusiast who knows himself to be such is not such. He has escaped. He is perspicuous. And this is, to put it simply, the insight at the heart of Swift's counter-enthusiasm.

Swift himself remains outside of this process—behind three or four layers of voices and at least as many bracketing textual conceits. It is worth recalling that *A Tale of a Tub* is a textual onion—opening with an Advertisement; an Apology; a Dedication by the Bookseller; an Address to the Reader by the Bookseller; a Dedicatory Epistle to His Royal Highness, Prince Posterity; a Preface; and a Philosophical Introduction on the Pulpit, the Ladder, and the Stage; before finally arriving at the central narrative. This is a heavily buffered tale. Indeed, the one place in the *Tale* where he loses his otherwise impeccable control of tone is in the Apology of the 1704 fifth edition, when responding to a number of contemporary charges of sacrilege leveled at earlier printings.[419] The voice protests, "[T]here generally runs an Irony through the Thread of the whole Book, which the Men of Tast will observe and distinguish, and which will render some

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[417] For a deeply sourced (but finally quite speculative) account of the possible source voices built into Swift's onion of a persona in this work, see Kenneth Craven, *Jonathan Swift and the Millennium of Madness: The Information Age in Swift's* A Tale of a Tub (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992). Craven nominates, among other sources, John Toland, Narcissus Marsh, William Temple, Shaftesbury, and Newton.

[418] *Tale*, 116.

[419] See William Wotton, "Observations upon the *Tale of a Tub*" and Edmund Curll's *Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub.* Both are collected in the Walsh edition, 215-252.

Objections that have been made, very weak and insignificant."[420] Through the whole Book, I'd say, less this one sentence.

Swift's use of Lucretius is also important to mention as it works within his larger counter-enthusiastic strategy. Swift lards his text with interjections, confessions, digressions, and abundant citations from Thomas Creech's 1684 translation of Lucretius. It is documented that Swift read *De Rerum Natura* at least three times while writing the *Tale*.[421] Some recent critics of Swift's work, including (most powerfully) Laura Baudot, have focused attention Swift's allusions to Lucretius, arguing that Swift is much closer to endorsing Epicurean materialism—or at least finding in it a philosophically serious and potentially terrifying vision of the world totally sapped of spiritual meaning—than had been previously supposed.[422] While such hints of dread are certainly detectable in Swift—for instance in the inscription with which this chapter began, and in the more personal writings with which this chapter will close—as they work in the *Tale* these Lucretian allusions tend to reinforce the central concern of the discourse of enthusiasm with the theoretical disfiguration of human language as a medium capable of transmitting spiritual authority—and disfigured in the cosmic mimetic sense discussed in the introduction: denied the capacity to bear the figuration of meaning symbolized in the typological relation to of humanity to the Word of God.[423] Consider his description of Aeolists' mode of apostolic transmission:

> [A]fter certain Gripings, the *Wind* and Vapours issuing forth; having first by their Turbulence and Convulsions within, caused an Earthquake in Man's little World;

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[420] *Tale*, 8.

[421] Cf. Swift's lines: "At nine, grave Nim and George facetious / Go to the Dean to read Lucretius." Cited in Damrosh, 301.

[422] See Laura Baudot, "What Not to Avoid in Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 49.3 (2009): 637-666. Baudot goes on to connect Swift's use of Lucretius to his critique of enthusiasm, arguing that he is implicitly critiquing Shaftesbury's rather cynical appropriation of Lucretius in describing a "positive" aesthetic enthusiasm capable of confronting "negative" religious enthusiasm. For a good earlier take on Swift's deep circuit of Epicurean allusions, see Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Four of Swift's Sources," *Modern Language Notes* 70.2 (1955): 95-100. For a good overview of the recent rise for Lucretius in eighteenth-century studies, see Jonathan Kramnick, "Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900,* 50.3 (2010): 683-725.

[423] Kroll's *The Material Word* remains the most exhaustive account of the rise of materialist metaphors and philosophical schema for thinking about written language in the eighteenth century.

> distorted the Mouth, bloated the Cheeks, and gave the Eyes a terrible kind of *Relievo*. At which Junctures, all their *Belches* were received for Sacred, the Sourer the better, and swallowed with infinite Consolation by their meager Devotees. And to render these yet more compleat, because the Breath of Man's Life is in his Nostrils, therefore, the choicest, most edifying, and most enlivening *Belches*, were very wisely conveyed thro' that Vehicle to give them a Tincture as they passed.[424]

The passage of sour air "through the nose," a frequent motif in parodies of Puritanism, gives these belches "a tincture" — as though they weren't quite material enough already. Tincture, it is important to mention, is a key word for the practice of alchemy, and thus for polemical comparisons of enthusiasts both to mad alchemists and to alchemical experiments in themselves—volatile mixtures of chemistry. This is, I think, in addition to an allusion to these familiar counter-enthusiastic motifs, also a play on Lucretius' notion that matter gives off "films," which the sense organs receive as a series of vanishingly thin layers of data.[425] Here these films become literal coatings of mucus transmitting not knowledge but just themselves—their own mucous essence. Swift also plays with the materialist blending of externality and internality. The Aeolists suffer earthquakes—the ground shakes through them. These enthusiasts are little worlds not in the sense of microcosmos, which would see the world ordered in symbolic patterns within and without, but as mere continuity with nature.

Swift's Lucretian handling of unlicensed pretentions to participation in Logos is still clearer in his speculations on why lay preachers ascend pulpits to preach. He writes:

> The deepest Account, and the most fairly digested of any I have yet met with, is this, That Air being a heavy Body, and therefore (according to the System of *Epicurus*) continually descending, must needs be more so, when loaden and press'd down by Words; which are also Bodies of much Weight and Gravity, as it

[424] *Tale*, 101.
[425] Lucretius, Book 4, ll. 45-53.

> is manifest from those deep *Impressions* they make and leave upon us; and therefore must be delivered from a due Altitude, or else they will neither carry a good Aim, nor fall down with sufficient Force.
>
> AND I am the readier to favour this Conjecture from a common Obsrvation: that in the several Assemblies of these Orators, Nature it self hath instructed the Hearers, to stand with their Mouths open, and erected parallel to the Horizon, so as they may be intersected by a perpendicular Line from the Zenith to the Center of the Earth. In which Position, if the Audience be well compact, every one carries home a Share, and little or nothing is lost.[426]

Tagged to this is a quotation from Book Four of *De Rerum Natura*: "'*Tis certain, then, that* Voice *that thus can wound / Is all* Material; Body *every* Sound."[427] What is most interesting about this passage—beyond its obvious travestying of enthusiastic aspirations to the Word of God by substituting for Christian Logos the Lucretian material word—is that Swift won't give his auditors ears. Instead, they catch words in their mouths. This might be a sly way of winking at the fact that Dissenters were often punished with the removal of their organs of hearing. Indeed, the voice of the *Tale* alludes to his intention to write a "General History of Ears" for precisely this reason.[428] But it also turns the audience into a bunch of worms, into beings of pure digestion, perhaps into bookworms. It renders the supposedly inspired language of the preacher not just tactile, but subject to the grossest sense.

In this way, as has often been noticed of the *Tale*, language is treated as a purely written, purely material entity. One might be tempted, perhaps recalling Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, to celebrate this dimension of the *Tale*—its refusal to locate language within any given speaker, and thus to free it from the chains of power that determine who is

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[426] *Tale*, 39.
[427] Ibid.
[428] *Tale*, 4.

listened to and who is not.[429] But this Derridean perspective ultimately misses the context of power and representation in which Swift's *Tale* participates. Swift turns the enthusiastic utterer into a being of writing—a spectral thing of ink and paper. But this is not emancipatory. On the contrary, Swift's travestying satire of enthusiasm removes those called enthusiasts from the public sphere. It replaces actual dissenters who have actual grievances with virtual replicas taken to be in some way satirically accurate—replicas which overshadow and distort the living voices, ears, and bodies of those called enthusiasts. The refusal of presence is, at least in this case, the triumph of caricature.

That said, the rearticulation of enthusiasm as a purely literary problem of virtual representation, which can be resolved via purely literary means, is one of Swift's most important discoveries. It is also one of the key conditions for the emergence of what we might recognize as the enlightenment style in general—the perspicuous style wherein the author's body seems to dissolve, and the writing hand to disappear into a witty, arch, half-insincere imitation of the voice from nowhere.[430] And it is worth reiterating that these travestying transpositions of the back-and-forth of living controversy into the meaningless jostling of tropes, words, figures, pages make for extremely effective polemical satire. Nobody near Swift's satire is talking about "tak[ing] up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, the sword I understand and prove, that it signifieth Christ and his word," and freeing the true Christians, who are in prison, and beheading the false ones, who sit on the thrones and the benches. Swift succeeds in diverting attention from actual theological, political, and linguistic issues, and redirecting it to the interpretive tangles of author, text, and reader. He relocates the drama of authority from the substantive to the metadiscursive. For Anne Conway, Quakers are more than chess pieces in the struggle for

[429] For one version of this perspective, see Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61-171. For a concise take on this view, see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 14-15.
[430] For a beautiful consideration of a later version of this voice, see D.A. Miller, *Jane Austen; or, The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

authority. They are living examples of the limits of the discourse of enthusiasm. For Swift, Quakers are virtual objects in a struggle for representation. Their actual beliefs *matter*—but only insofar as they can be distorted, avoided, delegitimized.

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4. Being Isaac Bickerstaff

Thus in his travestying satire of enthusiasm, Swift relocates intermodality from experience to textuality. Where the earlier counter-enthusiasts rearrange the coordinates of communication on the basis of a word imagined to be primarily oral, Swift imagines this word to be literary. He treats enthusiasm as a literary production—and as capable of being produced, as it were, involuntarily in not-astute-enough readers.

This upshot, implicit in *A Tale of a Tub*, is central to Swift's subsequent literary-political project—a series of occasional writings known collectively as *The Bickerstaff Papers*. These writings—including a mock almanac, "Predictions for the Year 1708" (1708), a follow-up, "The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions" (1708), and finally, "A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff Esq." (1709)—serve to hoax the astrologer, almanac-maker, and Dissenting Whig John Partridge.[431] Following a general excoriation of "Sottish Pretenders to Astrology" in the voice of Isaac Bickerstaff, a fellow astrologer who presents himself as of a higher class than Partridge (both professionally and financially –- he emphasizes that he does not need to earn his money through almanac-making), the "Predictions" observe off-hand that "*Partridge* the Almanack-maker … will infallibly dye upon the 29th of *March* next, about Eleven at night, of a raging Feaver."[432] It is worth pausing to notice that here we have another variation on the central authorial strategy of the discourse of enthusiasm. Swift impersonates an honest astrologer discrediting a dishonest astrologer—just as in a *Tale* he impersonates an honest (if still quite mad)

[431] See the note on these texts in Swift, *Parodies, Hoaxes, Mock Treatises: 'Polite Conversation,' Directions to Servants and Other Works*, ed. Valarie Rumbold, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift Vol. 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 36.
[432] *Parodies*, 37, 49.

philosophical enthusiast discrediting a fleet of dishonest (and still madder) political enthusiasts—just as Locke hermeneutically resuscitates an honest Paul discrediting dishonest appropriations of Paul—just as More provisionally inhabits Epicurean monism in order to expose the inner workings of Familists and Quakers. The associations of astrology with enthusiasm, though not emphasized in this account (at least in its present form), are presumably intuitive enough—and Partridge's enthusiastic bona fides are further established when it is revealed, in the "Accomplishment," that he is "a Nonconformist" with "a Fanatick Preacher" as his "Spiritual Guide."[433]

In this "Accomplishment," Swift assumes another voice—that of "a Person of Honour" who stops by Partridge's house on the 29th of April only to find, to his astonishment, that Bickerstaff's prediction appears to be accurate—Partridge is indeed dying of a fever.[434] The narrator is just in time to record Partridge's deathbed confessions. For about a fortnight, Partridge says, Bickerstaff's prediction of his death had "affected and work'd on his Imagination," taking "perpetual Possession of his Mind and Thoughts," which, he is persuaded, is the "true Natural Cause of his present Distemper." For, he continues, "I am thoroughly perswaded, and I think I have very good Reasons, that Mr. *Bickerstaff* spoke altogether by Guess, and knew no more what will happen this Year than I did my self."[435] He then provides these reasons:

> I am a Poor Ignorant Fellow, Bred to a Mean Trade, yet I have Sense enough to know that all Pretences of foretelling by Astrology are Deceits, for this manifest Reason, because the Wise and the Learned, who can only know whether there by any Truth in this Science, do all unanimously agree to laugh at and despise it; and none but the Poor, Ignorant, Vulgar, give it any Credit, and that only upon the

[433] *Parodies*, 63-64. For a take on the role of astrology in the theological-political history of seventeenth century England, see Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 19-91. This book helpfully situates the Partridge hoax in the context of other astrological hoaxes. See pp. 89-91.
[434] *Parodies*, 61.
[435] *Parodies*, 62.

Word of such silly Wretches as I and my Fellows, who can hardly Write or Read.[436]

Bickerstaff's prediction, in other words, had no connection with nature aside from its prompting his own internally roiling worries and cares—of his own troubled imagination—which led to his fever. This is truly the confession of an enthusiast—a being exposing himself as a humorally imbalanced, over-imaginative, lower-class, conniving, cheating, aspiring illiterate fellow. It is as though Prophet Hunt has produced his accusers' charges out of his own mouth. And in fact, it is still more complex, more elegantly travestying than that. In the "Accomplishment," Swift inhabits a persona who beholds an enthusiast, Partridge, accusing the enthusiast (Bickerstaff) he formerly inhabited to denigrate that enthusiast of being himself a charlatan and a cheat—which he knows because he is, just as Bickerstaff said, a charlatan and a cheat as well. Meanwhile, Swift depicts Partridge not in an outwardly polemical fashion—as a raving lunatic—but sympathetically, as someone who is pleasantly "surprized" at the "Condescention" shown by the narrator in visiting him on his deathbed, who confesses modestly and plainly his sins, and who ascribes, in the end, to the standard of judgment Swift wishes to uphold—the veneration for literacy, wisdom, learning, and nobility common to those called ancients in the battle of ancients and moderns.[437]

Swift has thus turned the discourse of enthusiasm into a literary perpetual motion machine. He inhabits voices inhabiting voices inhabiting voices. In an unpublished addition to the *Bickerstaff Papers*, "An Answer to Bickerstaff," Swift plays with this dimension of the hoax still further—pretending to be a skeptical observer of Bickerstaff's original predictions detecting certain signs that Bickerstaff might be a phony. As Irvin Ehrenpreis remarks, "For its complex brilliance of impersonation, this *Answer* has never been suitably praised. Here is Swift pretending to be a man who sees through a man whom Swift is pretending to be."[438] As delightful as the "Answer" is, it is worth pointing out that he already did something like this in the

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436 *Parodies*, 63.
437 *Parodies*, 62.
438 Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age: Volume Two, Dr. Swift* (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), 202. Ehrenpreis' longer reading of the hoax is still the best available. See pp. 197-209.

"Accomplishment," where his Partridge sees through his Bickerstaff—while further confessing his own humoral disposition toward being affected by such ridiculous predictions—his own susceptibility to enthusiastic fascination.

The Bickerstaff hoax was very successful. On April 1—and the timing of the "Accomplishment" to fall just before All Fool's Day was very much deliberate—large crowds gathered in front of Partridge's house to pay their respects or to see for themselves whether Bickerstaff's prediction had really come to pass. Partridge issued a furious rebuttal pointing out that rumors of his death had been greatly exaggerated, but this only perpetuated the hoax. Not only did Swift reply with another pamphlet in the guise of Bickerstaff—the "Vindication"—but many other writers jumped into the fray, composing additions to the controversy in all of the available guises and a number of new ones.[439] The portability of the Bickerstaff persona soon outstripped the immediate hoax. The most famous appropriation was Richard Steele's in *The Tatler*.[440] Matthew Prior would write in 1720 that, in creating Bickerstaff, Swift had equipped Steele with an "Occasion of living seven Years upon One of yr: thoughts."[441] And this was not the last such borrowing of Swift's astrological avatar. As Valerie Rumbold writes, "Appropriations of the Bickerstaff 'brand' were to prove exceptionally diverse, pervasive and long-lived: almanacs attributed to him were still being published in America in the nineteenth century."[442]

We are well situated to perceive in Bickerstaff—a figure whose very name evokes a Mosaic beard, a prophetic rod, an inclination to stir up controversy—something like a true triumph of enthusiasm, not as a real pathology, or dangerous heresy, but as a role available for imitating, stepping-into, perpetuating. If *A Tale of a Tub* recasts counter-enthusiasm as Mennipean

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[439] See Kate Loveman on the reception of the hoax in *Reading Fictions, 1660-1740: Deception in English Literary and Political Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 160-63.
[440] For a recent discussion of Steele's Bickerstaff as it bears on the literary representation of the afterlife as "periodical eternity," see Jacob Sider Jost, "The Afterlife and the *Spectator*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 51.3 (2011): 605-24.
[441] Quoted in *Parodies*, 40.
[442] *Parodies*, 40.

satire, *The Bickerstaff Papers* recast counter-enthusiasm as pseudo-history. Bickerstaff is an ideal diversionary figure designed not (like the *Tale*) to distract readers from taking seriously the more ominous counter-enthusiasms of Hobbes and Toland, but to arm readers with something like his own insight into the basically textual nature of all the polemical squabbling over enthusiasm. Swift has gifted his readers and his fellow writers with a pseudonym who yearns to be seen through—to expose and to be exposed—and to thrive in the gap between ordinary language and the social world. Ehrenpreis notes that the Bickerstaff hoax "has perhaps more significance as social history than as literary achievement"—and it is quite clear what he means.[443] This is a literary work that refuses to remain confined to its pages. It wants to leap out and move bodies in the world. It wants to prod gullible readers to venture to Partridge's house on the morning of April Fool's Day and ask whether he is still alive. It wants to encourage savvy readers to find a seat at the coffee house across the street (imagining there is such a place) and laugh at the queue of concerned almanac buyers worried about the fate of their favorite horoscopist. It has, as Speech-Act Theory would put it, an unusual word to world fit for a literary work—it desires, well before Marx, not to understand the world, but to change it.

But it wants to change it in a very peculiar, ultimately deflationary way. It wants to encourage reflection on its own ability to manipulate people, to heat and trouble minds, and it wants to guide people to extrapolate from its own example a dismissal of all claims to what we would now call supernatural powers of communication. The Bickerstaff hoax plays out as though in puppet miniature the larger goal of his travestying counter-enthusiasm—not to convince readers that he is telling them the truth, but to convince them that they can never know who is telling them the truth, particularly in print. The hoax is, in Shapin and Schaffer's terms, an argument against "virtual witnessing"—against the idea that language can be manipulated in such a way as to appear to show events before one's very eyes, that one can trust certain accounts

[443] *Dr. Swift*, 208.

(particularly coming from Persons of Honour), that one can know truth through style. Or, more precisely, it is a partial critique of such witnessing, and a partial defense; one can take a work of words as an occasion to witness oneself, to clarify one's own person-personae distinctions, to separate the private from the public from the natural as these forces press on one's own inner experience, but one should not take anything "demonstrated" in any work of words—aside, of course, from the Bible—on faith. One who believes another's published word without taking that word as an occasion to reflect on the situation of this very belief in one's own reading eyes and thinking mind is no better than Swift's imitation Partridge, whom Bickerstaff is able to drive to a feverish self-fulfillingly prophetic death simply by occasioning the over-activity of his own imagination. The Bickerstaff hoax thus blurs the lines separating self, natural cause, and society—but only, finally, to sharpen those lines, to show that one should distinguish between oneself and one's larger discursive context, and to show how easily one might fall prey to the power of suggestion, and how readily one might attribute either to nature or to some spiritual agency internal convictions that have no basis beyond the cooperation of one's own expectations with the occasional scribblings of some resourceful and timely fraud.

Swift's polemical enthusiasm of travesty is finally not interested in whether or not there is such a thing as enthusiasm. It doesn't need enthusiasm to be anything more than a set of literary conventions and resonances marshaled at various moments in various ways—and occasioning, in those who can see through this literary nature of the concept, a capacity to appreciate and even replicate this strategy of other-inhabitation and self-ironization. After Swift, as has been mentioned, a legion of English literary spectators, French philosophes, and American editorialists take up the nom-de-plume not just of Bickerstaff—later, they also try on Gulliver's curious combination of everyman and no-man, idealist and misanthrope, rationalist and lunatic. These appropriators carefully reproduce Swift's insight, that one's counter-enthusiastic authority rests upon readers' recognition that one tonally signals one's own performance of enthusiasm. I will

only mention in passing that one might follow this strategy forward to our own day—to *The Onion*, to Stephen Colbert, and to the seemingly inescapable everyday expectation that one to swath one's opinions in sarcasm, snarkiness, and (in Peter Sloterdijk's phrase) "cynical reason."[444]

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5. Swift's Prophetic Satire

This dimension of Swift's counter-enthusiasm is extremely influential. But there is more to Swift's satire than the prevailing injunction to signal one's awareness of one's enthusiastic impersonations. Even in such a moment as that mentioned above—where Partridge is softened and (for lack of a more precise term) humanized even in the course of being pilloried—one sees that Swift's satire involves more than self-aware caricature. Something about it reaches for a clarity that acknowledges but exceeds the cynicism of the travestying dimension. Indeed, the notion of literary clarity—of the communication of something otherwise incommunicable—might help to bring out this dimension. To rely once more on the schema of intermodality, what is being communicated in Swift's satire is not just the distinction of self, other, and matter, but the participation of these dimensions in a complex act of significance—their merging and blending in a given point of shared experiences, both virtual (belonging to the author and the represented figure) and real (belonging to oneself as reader). Swift's satire, then, is not just a didactic mode insisting that one recognize one's own ignorance and stop taking so seriously everything one reads. It *is* this. And this is important. But it has a positive communicative force as well.

I have framed this force in terms of a prophetic satire working not through travesty but through transfiguration, and I provided an example of this at the opening of this chapter in the conspicuously failed disenchantment of Stella's lock of hair. One can find another, more complex example of this prophetic strain in what is probably the best-known passage from *A Tale of a Tub*.

[444] Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

The enthusiastic narrator is discussing the advantage of surfaces over interiors of objects and lamenting the tendency of reason toward unnatural dissections:

> Now, I take all this to be the last Degree of perverting Nature; one of whose Eternal Laws it is, to put her best Furniture forward … Whereof I have been farther convinced from some late Experiments. Last Week I saw a Woman *flay'd*, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse.[445]

Critics have frequently noticed the sudden combination of casualness and brutality interrupting the narrator's pseudo-philosophical blather in the second sentence here: "Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse."[446] This resonates, of course, with the more general grotesquery in Swift's representations of women—and we've seen examples of this, and how it works in his enthusiastic rhetoric and in the wider rhetoric of despiritualization he inherits.[447]

But in a way oddly like the moment with which we began—"Only a woman's hair"—there's another current here also worth identifying. This anonymous woman flayed is subject here to something like the most horrific disenchantment imaginable—a literal reduction of her human surface to its material parts. But this process, precisely in its insistent reductionism, its casual sadistic experimentalism, twists against itself, conspicuously failing to disenchant its object. This woman flayed, in other words, survives, or comes to life. She is transfigured in being so callously anonymized, anatomized, and atomized by a literary voice we have learned not to trust. Another way of putting this: the sentence notices, despite itself, her spiritual dignity.

I would like to offer that what's going on here is a new kind of holy foolishness expressed within but reaching beyond the limits imposed by Swift's polemical satire of enthusiasm. Swift's

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[445] *Tale,* 111-12.
[446] E.g. Claude Rawson, "Order and Cruelty: A Reading of Swift (with some Comments on Pope and Johnson)," *Essays in Criticism*, 20 (1970): 24-56; Prem Nath, "The Background of Swift's Flayed Woman," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 20 (1984): 363-66.
[447] Baudot; Castle.

holy foolishness is of course clearly indebted to the long tradition of Christian satire evident, for instance, in Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, which subtly shifts in the course of its unfolding from a castigation of the foolishness of the fallen world to a celebration of a sublime foolishness appropriate to the contemplation of an unthinkable divinity. But whereas Erasmus—and most literary champions of the holy fool—ironically celebrates the persona of his satire, the voice of folly itself, Swift ironically dignifies or spiritualizes the object wrongly noticed and described by his persona's voice. His prophetic satire requires the authorial occupation of a persona marked by the discourse of enthusiasm. He must inhabit an enthusiast. But at the same time, this inhabitation allows for the opening up of a horizon of meaning that exceeds the polemical and travestying effects of the more straightforward satire of enthusiasm. That which is figured in the polemical mode—the enthusiastic material body—becomes transfigured in the prophetic mode. It becomes an occasion for the communication of a persisting spirit that seems to rise unnoticed behind the literary speaker. The irony of this effect is compounded, of course, by the fact that Swift's polemical satire is so vehemently anti-prophetic. Despite, or perhaps one dialectical twist beyond, his satire of prophets, Swift produces a prophetic satire—a communication, as though through fumes and mists, that reproduces something like a literary Aeolism.

One might perceive this effect in Gulliver—a character who is, on the whole, very much an enthusiastic bodysuit filled with a variety of strong opinions, but who at the same time evokes pity, wonder, and even terror, particularly following his adventures in Houyhnhnmland, as he munches hay in his stable with his horses, trying to recall them to reason.[448] Such moments of missed or misdirected humanity seem designed to make readers' feelings *think*, if one might put it this way—thus to use the enthusiastic figure of Gulliver (or the narrator of the *Tale*, or Partridge, or many others) as a sort of alchemical vessel in which one might pour one's own mixture of

[448] Swift, *Gulliver*, 501.

affects. The inhabitation of the enthusiast in this case allows for a reaching into the reader. Better, it opens a plane of meaning where author, reader, and text can meet on equal terms.

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6. Doggerel Confessions

Such claims surely require a good deal of close explanation. Rather than proliferate examples from Swift's fictions, I would like to close this chapter by turning to his intentionally doggerel autobiographical poem, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," in which a verse form inflected by the discourse of enthusiasm serves as an unlikely vehicle for something like genuine confession. Rather than wear the *figure* of the enthusiast, Swift here wears one of the key literary *forms* of enthusiasm—doggerel rhyme. This should further help to connect the end of this narrative of the rise of the discourse of enthusiasm to its beginnings in the post-Reformation anxieties regarding the vulgar appropriation of scripture.

For many years, Swift's poetry was not widely considered serious. Samuel Johnson's judgment, so often a substitute for that of those who follow—that Swift's poems are stylistically clear and accomplished ("often humorous, almost always light," "correct" in diction, "smooth" in numbers, "exact" in rhymes, "all easiness and gaiety") and thematically too often obviously "gross" and "trifling"—was taken for the last word on the subject.[449] In recent decades, the consensus has certainly changed, and rightly so.[450] The context of this project—with its observation that the discourse of enthusiasm centrally involved the figuration and inhabitation of the enthusiast as stylistic and psychological proxy for the abstract self confronted with the legitimation crises of the long Reformation—should contribute to this re-evaluation. It should help reveal, to put it simply, the degree to which Swift's poetry—by far his most personal literary

[449] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 4 volumes, edited by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 3.214.
[450] E.g. Howard Erskine-Hill's "Swift's Knack at Rhyme," in *Sustaining Literature: Essays on Literature, History, and Culture, 1500-1800* (2007); Julia K. Callander, "Cannibalism and Communion in Swift's "Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 54.3 (2014): 585-604.

form apart from his letters—depends for its formal structure on the discourse of enthusiasm, and provides him with allegorical leverage for what I have called his prophetic satire of the enthusiast—his attempt to reach readers, to deposit his complex emotions within them, to evoke a larger, even an evangelical horizon of meaning.

So how does this work? Swift wrote poetry largely in the form known as Hudibrastic verse, named after Samuel Butler's massively popular satire of the English Civil Wars.[451] Butler's verse form—iambic tetrameter—is jangling and absurd, suited to his relentless mockery of Parliamentarians, Puritans, Presbyterians, Astrologers, Fortune-Tellers, and other so-called enthusiasts.[452] Swift's debt to Butler has long been acknowledged—and indeed might be felt in the deliberately corrupted rhymes and scatological images of lines such as these, from the Third Canto of Book Two: "He would an *Elegie* compose / On Maggots squeez'd out of his Nose; / In *Lyrick* numbers write an Ode on / His mistress, eating a Black-pudden: / And, when imprison'd Aire escap'd her, / It puft him with *Poetic Rapture*."[453] Butler's debt, in turn, to the great burlesquing Mennipean satirists of the European Renaissance—above all, to Rabelais, Spenser, Cervantes, and Scarron—has likewise long been acknowledged.[454] But this genealogy misses a crucial dimension of influence—the degree to which both Butler and Swift choose a verse form that resonates with the popular appropriations of lofty language that we've identified with the discourse of enthusiasm from its inception. They are more than high satirists—they are, perhaps like all Menippean satirists, ironic appropriators and clever rehabilitators of outrageously overweening "vulgar" numbers.

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[451] *Hudibras* was published in three books — in 1663, 1664, and 1678 — and collected in 1684.
[452] Butler's role in setting the terms of the later discourse of enthusiasm is highly significant. Not only is *Hudibras* a sensation, his other writings – including his *Characters* – contribute to the growing sense that enthusiasm is everywhere, that many sorts of people ought to be understood as enthusiastic, and that enthusiasts are a constant threat to civilization. A longer study would pursue Butler's influence, particularly as it shapes the notion of character and the representation thereof in the build-up to the English novel.
[453] Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, edited by John Wilders (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 163.
[454] Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 135.

This association of usurped spiritual authority and doggerel rhyming remained strong through the seventeenth century and beyond. Recall Henry VIII's disgust at the proliferation of "printed books, printed ballads, plays, rhymes, songs, and other fantasies" playing with "the sacred and holy scriptures." Recall the example of Prophet Hunt, with whom we began, who merrily declares in vulgar rhyme, between his many appropriations of holy language, that "the deepest scholler in Cambridge Schoole, / May be taught wisdom by Christs foole." By the 1660s, this association of unlearned hermeneutics with "casting holy things into Doggerel, which is worse and more abominable then unto Dogs," was so widespread as to be proverbial.[455] The High Church divine Richard Allestree, author of *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), lamented in *The Government of the Tongue* (1667) those "impious discourses" which are "bottom'd on the most sacred," including, in addition to "profane paraphrases," those which "use the Scripture as they do odd ends of Plaies, to furnish out their Jests; clothe all their little impertinent conceits in its Language, and debase it by the mixture of such miserable trifles, as themselves would be ashamed of, were they not heightned and inspirited by that profaneness."[456] Much like Locke in his "Preface" to the *Paraphrase* of Paul's Epistles, Allestree compares such abuses of scripture to ordinary circumstances, asking how one would feel if, after having received a letter from a friend full of "exact instructions" and "the most moving expressions of kindness and tenderness," one was to find chunks of this letter transformed suddenly into "doggrel rime, to be made sport for the rabble, or at the best have the most eminent phrases of it pickt out and made a common by-word."[457] Samuel Butler himself strengthens the association of lay scriptural appropriation with doggerel controversialism—of a lowly seizing of the highest matters—in two satirical letters between a Puritan (William Prynne) and a Quaker (John Audland), in which his imitation Prynne is especially prone to punctuating his discourse with such Hudibrastic howlers as: "*Of this Opinion*

[455] Samuel Butler, *Two letters one from John Audland, a Quaker, to William Prynne, the other, William Prynnes answer* (1672), 6. *EEBO*.
[456] Richard Allestree, *The Government of the Tongue* (1667), 24, 27. *EEBO*.
[457] Allestree, 28-29.

William Prynn *was the / Sixt day of* March *six hundred thirty three*."[458] The viciously anti-Roundhead Royalist poet Robert Gould provides in 1685 a summary example of this association: "The Tuneful *Smec*, once left his hungry Prose, / In *Doggrel* twang'd his *Calvin* through his nose."[459] Gould concludes: "Lampoon's, dull Libels, Satyrs, Pasquils, Jests, / The dangerous Weapons of the Rebel Beast."[460]

The success of *Hudibras*, in this context, owes much to the adroitness with which it recasts a verse form associated with Dissenters as a satirical weapon for exposing those very Dissenters. This is a formal variation on the theme we have seen so often in the discourse of enthusiasm—the dipper dipped, the Quaker set quaking, the devil beaten at his own game. Butler shows that he can appropriate the doggerel form of the impious appropriators. And his example is exceedingly influential. Following the publication of the First Book of *Hudibras* in 1663, a catalogue of counter-enthusiastic imitators follows Butler's lead—notably including two Hudibrastic imitations by Henry Sacheverell, whose fiery sermons against Dissenters would incite popular riots in 1710.[461] This context gives new torque to the standard observation of ensuing critics, that "*Four-Foot-Rhymes*, or *Hudibrastic* Metre, attempts to talk of great Things in little Verse," or "express[es] the high in terms of the low."[462] *Low* and *high* mean many things here: these terms

458 Butler, *Two Letters*, 21.

459 "Smec" alludes to the group of Puritan divines known as Smectymnuus, who collectively published a series of writings against Joseph Hall during the 1640s; the couplet perhaps further alludes to their "tuneful" defender Milton.

460 Robert Gould, The laurel a poem on the poet-laureat (1685), 15.

461 Sacheverell wrote two Hudibrastic imitations in 1663: *Hudibras on Calamy's imprisonment, and Wild's poetry. To the bishops* (London, 1663) and *Sir Hudibras to the Vintners: a satyr on their adulterated dear wines* (London, 1663). See also Theophilus Rationalis, *New news from Bedlam, or, More work for Towzer and his brother Ravanscroft alias hocus pocus whipt and script, or, A ra-ree new fashion cupping glass most humbly represented to the observatory* (1682); Edward Ward, *The life and notable adventures of that renown'd knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha. Merrily translated into Hudibrastick verse* (London, 1710-11); *The country Hobb upon the town mobb: or, the Party Scuffle. In Hudibrastick Verse* (London, 1715); Van Hugo Gasper Lunatus, *Homunculus: or, the character of Mezereon, The High-German Doctor. An Hudibrastick poem* (London, 1715); *The saints congratulatory address: or, Th—-s B—-dbury's speech, in the name of all the Prot-nt Diss-rs, to the B—-p of B—-r's Jesuit* (London, 1718); Free Mason, *The free masons; an hudibrastick poem: Illustrating the whole history of the ancient free masons, from the building the tower of Babel to this* [date?]; *The Pettifoggers. A satire. In hudibrastick verse. Displaying the various frauds, deceits, and knaviash practices, of the pettifogging ...* (London, 1723); Ambrose Philips, *The free-Thinker: or, essays on ignorance, superstition, bigotry, enthusiasm, craft, &c. Intermix'd with several pieces of wit and humour* (London, 1733); Impartial Hand, *The progress of Methodism in Bristol: or, the Methodist unmask'd* (Bristol, 1743).

462 William Coward, *Licentia poetica discuss'd: or, the true test of poetry* (London, 1709), 75. See also Johnson's *Life of Butler*: "Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the stile and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments

catch the play of class appropriation in the Hudibrastic form; they evoke the politics behind the traditional delineation of style into low, middle, and high modes of expression; and, beneath it all, they allude (likely unconsciously) to the most outrageous violation of style and form ever committed on English soil, at least from the point-of-view of that country's defenders of Established institutions: the casting of Holy Writ into the vulgar, doggerel fetters of ordinary language.

This, I would maintain, is the proper background for appreciating the poetry of Jonathan Swift—which, again, displays a double relationship to the discourse of enthusiasm. On one hand, his poetry travesties the form, the subject, and the figure of the enthusiast, frequently providing for the comical embodiment of prophets, wizards, magicians, doomsayers, and dealers in brimstone ("A Famous Prediction of *Merlin*, the British Wizard," "Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod," "The Windsor Prophecy," "The Day of Judgement," "The Place of the Damned"), or reflecting on classical enthusiastic themes like dreams, desire, and poetry itself ("On Dreams. An Imitation of Petronius," "Desire and Possession," "On Poetry. A Rhapsody"), or commenting on seditious echoes of the mid-century troubles ("The Revolution at Market-Hill," "An Excellent New Song on a Seditious Pamphlet"), and nearly always in rhyming iambic tetrameter couplets or some other "low" form (ballad meter, anapests, etc). In this manner, he continues and expands the scope of the Hudibrastic satire of enthusiasm. On the other hand, and to a degree Butler certainly never attains, Swift finds in these counter-enthusiastic themes and forms a vehicle for self-exposure, for confession, for friendship, for love—for reaching, connecting, communicating. He wears the so-called enthusiast's poetic garb not only to mock and undermine that enthusiast—but, to put it very plainly, to express himself as a spiritual being.

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and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption." *Lives*, 2.10.

Consider "Verses on the Death of Dr *Swift*" (1731), a quasi-mock-paranoid prognostication—hence, already, prophetic—of the world's reception of the news of his death.[463] He imagines this news spreading in ripples from intimate to more distant circles; few appear much to care about his death except insofar as they have some social interest in appearing sufficiently mournful ("My female friends, whose tender hearts / Have better learned to act their parts, / Receive the news in *doleful dumps*, / 'The Dean is dead, (*pray, what is trumps?*)'" (ll. 225-28)), some prideful stake in appearing to have accurately predicted the severity of his symptoms ("He'd rather choose that I should die, / Than his prediction prove a lie" (ll. 131-32)) or some financial hopes in his last will and testament ("O, may we all for death prepare! / What has he left? And who's his heir?" (ll. 153-54)). His long-anticipated death finally arrives: "Now the departing pray'r is read. / He hardly breathes. The Dean is dead" (ll. 149-50). His body, like that of the woman flayed—or the beau whom the *Tale*-teller has "stripped" and dissected in his presence, only to find "so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes"—is opened and examined.[464] The doctors who perform the examination exempt themselves of any blame, finding that "all his vital parts were sound," and that his death is attributable merely to his refusal to "take advice" (ll. 176, 172).

With the Dean's body thus apparently despiritualized, the poem next chases his paper afterlife—his literary works and the reputation they (he hopes) sustain. More bad news. Within a year of his death, his pages have been usefully repurposed as pastry wrappers: "I sent them with a load of books, / Last Monday, to the pastry-cook's" (ll. 259-60). Other authors—suspiciously enthusiastic—are recommended in his stead: "Next, here's Sir Robert's *Vindication*, / And Mr. Henly's last Oration" (ll. 277-78).[465] Swift describes Henley, in his own note, as

> a clergyman who, wanting both merit and luck to get preferment, or even to keep

[463] Jonathan Swift, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, edited by Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
[464] *Tale*, 112.
[465] The famous Sir Robert Walpole was among Swift's political enemies.

his curacy in the Established Church, formed a new conventicle, which he calls an Oratory. There, at set times, he delivereth strange speeches compiled by himself and his associates, who share the profit with him: every hearer pays a shilling each day for admittance. He is an absolute dunce, but generally reputed crazy.[466]

Thus it appears that all of Swift's efforts to travesty and expose enthusiasts have been in vain. Not only are his own works forgotten, but those of "Orator" Henley (as he was known) are triumphant. Same with the tracts of Thomas Woolston, "a clergyman" who (as Swift again puts it) "hath in several treatises, in the most blasphemous manner, attempted to turn Our Saviour and his miracles into ridicule":[467]

"He doth an honour to his gown,
By bravely running *priest-craft* down:
He shows, as sure as God's in Glo'ster,
That [Jesus] was a grand imposter,
That all his miracles were cheats,
Performed as jugglers do their feats.
The Church had never such a writer:
A shame, he hath not got a mitre!" (ll. 291-98)

Swift emphasizes Woolston's attempts to debunk the miracles of Jesus—which he did in the wildly popular *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1727-29).[468] But perhaps his more corrosive influence, from the perspective of counter-enthusiasm, is his perpetuation of the materialist-Familist-Quaker message so feared by Henry More—that Biblical events should be understood as allegories anticipating present spiritual truths. As William Trapnell summarizes Woolston's

466 Ross, ed., 523.
467 Ibid.
468 William H. Trapnell, 'Woolston, Thomas (*bap.* 1668, *d.* 1733)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29963, accessed 29 March 2016]

approach: "Woolston soon began to read Origen and, ascribing to other church fathers his belief in the figurative, rather than the literal, significance of the events recorded in the Bible, he concluded that only a figurative exegesis of biblical texts could yield the ultimate truth of scripture. Thus he believed that the material events recorded in the Bible prefigured spiritual events."[469] This is as though to say—Jesus is not an equal part of the Godhead. He is an ideal emanation whom *you*, dear interlocutor, might find within yourself, in your own incarnate body, in your own spirit, in a universe allegorically centered on your own existence.

This is the nadir of Swift's poem. His body is so much dissected meat. His paper soul is pastry-wrappings. The impious frauds whom he worked all his career to travesty are thriving. But it is at this point that a pulse—already present but muted—picks up in the poem. This pulse has, to use a Swiftian heuristic, a simple surface and a deep surface. On the simple surface of the plot, voices—a "club assembled at the Rose" (l. 300), a stylish tavern—begin to form, between favorable, unfavorable, and indifferent judgments, his "character impartial" (l. 306). This chorus—and it does feel like a civil body out of a tragedy—comes to a few points of not-so-bad consensus. Swift was respected at court. His books sold. His intentions were moral. He was an original (ironically conveyed in a line stolen from Denham, "But what he writ, was all his own").[470] He did not genuflect to the great. He was ill used—banished to an Irish Deanery for sparing nobody in his satire; driven from England and mocked in the streets as a Jacobite following the death of Queen Anne; abandoned by many of his friends. And yet he did at least one truly noble act with his talent for impersonation—saving Ireland from debased currency in his papers written as the Drapier. And when the printer who allowed these papers to be published was brought to trial by a corrupt legal system, Swift—as the Drapier—opposed this Judge Whitshed, a "wicked monster on the bench, / Whose fury blood could never quench; / As vile and profligate a villain, / As modern Scroggs, or old Tressilian" (ll. 417-20). Interestingly,

[469] Trapnell.
[470] John Denham, "On Mr. Abraham Cowley" (1677), l. 30. *EEBO*.

Whitshed is compared here to two judges whom one might expect the more purely counter-enthusiastic Swift to applaud. Scroggs, Charles II's Chief Justice, persecuted many Roundheads. And Tressilian was in charge of the genocidal backlash following the Peasant's Revolt of 1381—an "enthusiastical" uprising as feared in its context as that of the 1640s was in Swift's. In short, Swift seems to be deliberately emphasizing the degree to which his counter-enthusiasm is forgiving, is tempered, finally chooses mercy over justice. The simple surface rehabilitation continues: Swift was too satirical, but he meant well, never mocked any who didn't deserve it, felt pity along with bile, loved his friends, and with "the little wealth he had" helped found "a house for fools and mad: / To show, by one satiric touch, / No nation wanted it so much" (ll. 479-82). The poem concludes: "That kingdom he hath left his debtor, / I wish it soon may have a better" (ll. 483-84).

And so the public sphere of choral voices gathered at the Rose comes to a rather rosy consensus about Swift—and one not (oh, his prophetic soul!) so far off from posterity's. In the terms of our reading, the simple surface of the poem cannot follow through with the apparently strong urge in the poem to despiritualize Swift's body, to leave it as mere matter, and body of work, to treat it as so much wastepaper. But this is not the only way in which the latter part of the poem suggests a prophetic, redemptive satire of enthusiasm.

This second dimension is what I have called the deep surface pulse of prophecy in the poem's final turn. This deep surface pulse is built from Biblical allusions. These are worth carefully tracking. The first arrives on line 241, as the Dean's female friends are rather off-handedly discussing his death while playing cards: "His time was come, he ran his race; / We hope he's in a better place" (ll. 241-42). This alludes to Hebrews 12.1—"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"—a verse that, in addition to the at least somewhat Swiftian moral injunction to run one's race with

patience, introduces a "great cloud of witnesses" which one might see as resonant with the Rose chorus and the larger swirl of voices for which that chorus is a metonym. This allusion feels rather lonely when it arrives in the downward arc of the poem. It finds company as the poem turns toward the better. As the Rose chorus reflects on the Dean's behavior at court, they allude directly to a verse from Jude: "He never courted men in station, / *Nor persons had in admiration*" (ll. 325-26): "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). Thus this allusion at once praises the Dean and condemns the circles satirically represented in the earlier movement of the poem, who praise him for advantage only. As the chorus continues they bring in another direct allusion, this time to Psalm 146.3 ("Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help"): "He follow'd David's lesson just, / In princes never put his trust" (ll. 340-41). As the redemption continues, so do the allusions (and who to follow David but his most famous relation?). Remarking on how the Dean's friends abandoned him in his hour of greatest need, the chorus at last brings in the Gospels—"When, *ev'n his own familiar friends* / Intent upon their private ends, / Like renegadoes now he feels, / *Against him lifting up their heels*" (ll. 403-6). This comes from the typological verse, John 13.18: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." And one more Gospel allusion—very fittingly, to Luke's Parable of the Unjust Judge—is interlaced into the celebration of the Dean's greatest hour, his opposition to Chief Justice Whitshed, who "long all justice had discarded, / *Nor fear'd he* GOD*, nor man regarded*" (ll. 421-22) (cf. "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man" (Luke 18.2)). That word—GOD—jumps out on the page. It is the third such capitalization in the poem—the other two being SWIFT (l. 254) and LIBERTY (l.

347).[471] This sequence of three words might too be read as an arc or short story about a peculiar man's release from life into God.

Keeping in mind this deep surface of the redemptive arc, this poem, I want to suggest, can be read both as prophecy and liturgy. It weaves Swift's life into the rhythms of the Bible in a manner that is by no means in jest even as it is deeply ironical—in the theological sense of irony, which stresses the simultaneity of one's own profane life and God's divine plan, and the distance between those levels, where this waking dream called life is taken to be a shadowy instantiation of the invisible divine reality in which it unfolds and into which, with death, it is released. The moments of Biblical allusion push into the narration of Swift's death and life—and, crucially, those narrative elements are reversed, suggesting a life after death—like so many prophecies fulfilled. The poem thus evokes a temporal stream before (in both senses of the word, before in the past and before in the future) the life events therein depicted which is visible in glimpses during life's hardest and most triumphant moments. This is Swift's sense of real participation in prophetic figuration, these small moments when the contours of events reveal an affinity with the bigger story of eternity.

But how is this not just as bad, in its way, as the Biblical appropriations so excoriated by Allestree and countless other Anglican divines, Swift included?[472] How is this not an instance of the dismemberment of the Biblical body—a pulling of the text into bloody chunks then selectively applied to one's own private hermeneutic vision? How is this not, in short, John Locke's hermeneutic nightmare all over again? Still worse, how is this different from the method attributed to Henry Nicholis by Henry More—where the worshipper's own life is taken to be the allegorical center of the Incarnation of the Word? Perhaps it is not all that different, in the end.

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[471] These words are capitalized in many editions of the poem, though it should be mentioned that this poem has a vexed textual history. Stephen Karian reviewed some fifty-seven editions of the poem and found many inconsistencies. See Karian, *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166, 184.

[472] *A Tale of a Tub* in particular laments this practice in its satire of Peter, who abuses the plain meaning of his father's will (i.e. the Bible) in order to embellish his coat (his profession of faith); and in the satire against Jack as well, who in reaction to Peter's excesses reads the will so literally that he ends up tearing his own coat to shreds.

There is a strong sense in this poem that the end of one's own life corresponds in some way to the end of the world; the eschaton is revealed to be one's own death: "Behold the fatal day arrive!" (l. 147). But there is also the suggestion, as with both More and Locke (though, again, with a very different emphasis) that bad typologies—enthusiasms—reverse the proper tenor-vehicle relation in the allegory of reality. Oneself is not the tenor. Oneself is the vehicle. One's life is a fragment off of which the source of meaning—the story of the Incarnate Word—might glint in glimpses. The pulse of prophecy is always there in the poem, before the life—but it only comes out occasionally (in both senses of that word).

It is significant too that Swift stages the upswelling of prophecy into his poem in a chorus of other voices. Actually, there are two choruses—first, the card-playing women, second, the club gathered at the Rose. This suggests, of course, that one cannot declare oneself the allegorical center. Insofar as one has a place in the allegory of truth, this must be recognized from without one's own experience—and not simply by one person, by a confluence of views. The chorus is thus akin to a church. And so, as already mentioned, this prophetic enthusiasm has a liturgical dimension as well. It emerges not into private individuals but into groups—and (as Habermas might put it) out of the process of offering, hearing, and revising reasons. This is prophecy as common prayer. It is possible to read the gradual eruption of Biblical allusions into the poem as an adaptation of the Anglican liturgy—which begins with readings from the Old Testament (in this case, Psalms) and the New Testament writings (in this case, Hebrews and Jude), and culminates in a reading from the Gospels (here John and Luke).[473] Perhaps Swift absorbed this rhythm from the hundreds of services he preached in his lifetime. Perhaps he intends it to be discerned. I think, given the prominence with which the Gospel allusions arrive at the key points of the redemptive arc, that the latter is much more likely.

[473] See "Concerning the Service of the Church," *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

In the end, Swift's prophetic enthusiastic register seems bound not to satisfy. One feels obligated to point out that whether or not he stages the prophetic murmuring up as an emergence from a chorus of voices, his own poetic brain is finally the narrative's horizon. He engineers the illusion of liturgical consensus—and for reasons which are only too obviously self-serving. Faced with the prospect of oblivion, he is cheering himself up, a fact only partially alleviated by the tongue-in-cheek framing of the whole poem. There are too the more-than-hints of misogyny so endemic to his writings, where the chorus of women produce, Sibyl-like, unconscious Biblical allusion, and the chorus of men—true prophets coinciding with the redemptive turn—allude directly, knowingly, justly to the correspondences between the good life lived and God's life on earth. Here the Christian tropology of false prophecy dovetails with the limits of Habermas' original formulation of the public sphere thesis—in the one, the prophesying women are unconscious forebears of their male fulfillers; in the other, they are forgotten bystanders in a process of rational argument from which they were economically, scientifically, and socially excluded.

But there is a way in which this prophetic dimension is quite moving as well—and an important reminder of the degree to which, even as the problem of false prophecy inspired Swift (and More and Locke) to identify and readjust the balance of distinct epistemological spheres involved in one's own life and shooting through one's own language, the basic faith in communication—in finding, somehow, the capacity within language to reach—remained central, and remained, even if so disguisedly that within a few generations the strong shadows of God cast across Swift's work were no longer so easily felt, theological.

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7. How Swift Says, "I Love You"

With that in mind, I would like to close this chapter with a final, more everyday instance of Swift's prophetic enthusiasm. About ten years after Swift was driven from London by the rise

of the Whig government, during which time he apparently had little contact with his former literary circle (famously known as the Scriblerians, also including John Gay and Alexander Pope), [474] Gay finally took it upon himself to reach out to Swift in a letter.[475] Pope soon did likewise. In these letters, Pope and Gay express themselves in familiar terms of affection, insisting that Swift remained in their thoughts and hearts despite his physical distance. As Pope puts it, "Dr Swift lives still in England, in ev'ry place & company where he woud chuse to live; & I find him in all the conversations I keep, & in all the Hearts in which I would have any Share."[476] The whole letter is a sequence of such literary Hallmark moments.

Swift's reply, on the other hand, communicates a position that Hallmark has not yet ventured to commodify:

> [W]hat can be the Design of your Letter but Malice, to wake me out of a Scurvy Sleep, which however is better than none, I am towards nine years older Since I left you Yet that is the least of my Alterations: My Business, my Diversions my Conversations are all entirely changed for the Worse, and So are my Studyes and my Amusements in writing; Yet after all, this humdrum way of Life might be passable enough if you would let me alone, I shall not be able to relish my Wine, my Parsons, my Horses nor my Garden for three Months, till the Spirit you have raised Shall be dispossessed.[477]

"If you would let me alone"—this phrase always lands, for me, with such moving force. Swift backs his curmudegeonliness up with a materialist theory of friendship:

> Your Notions of Friendship are new to me; I believe every man is born with his quantum, and he can not give to one without Robbing another[.] I very well know

[474] There is a letter from Swift to Pope dated 1721, which Pope apparently never received, perhaps because it was rather a literary than a personal epistle.
[475] "John Gay to Swift, 22 December 1722." In Swift, *Correspondence*, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-65), 3:439. All letters cited from this edition.
[476] "Alexander Pope to Swift, August 1723," 3:458.
[477] "Swift to John Gay, 8 January 1722-23," 3:441-42.

> to whom I would give the first place in my Friendship, but they are not in the way, I am condemned to another Scene, and therefore I distribute it in penny-worths to those about me, and who displease me least[,] and should do the same to my fellow Prisoners if I were Condemned to a Jayl.[478]

We are in a position, now, to see what Swift's doing here. He is playing the enthusiast. He is putting on the bodysuit of mechanical spirit. But we also know, as his friends would have known, not to trust him. He plays the philosophical enthusiast here in order to say, more strongly than he could say it directly, "I love you."

I mentioned Talal Asad near the beginning of my chapter. With Asad's work in mind, we can recover from Swift a better sense of enlightenment affect and form—surely of its polemical history, and we are still navigating his contributions to the political-theological drama of who can speak and who can't, who can represent interiority and who can't—but also, as I've suggested, what I would like to call, relishing the irony just as he invites us to do, his prophetic dimension. Along with the recent work of Helen Deutsch, one might in this later Swift the author about whom Edward Said wrote, echoing Wordsworth's call to Milton, "Jonathan Swift, thou should be living in this hour."[479] This prophetic Swift is something we need to keep in view— offering, at the enlightenment's outset, a version of enlightenment discourse that is attuned through irony to ineffability. I hope to have shown, in part, where his literary perspective comes from, and why it is so crucial to study and perhaps to evoke, carefully, in this precarious moment called, too confidently, the secular age.

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[478] "Swift to Alexander Pope, 20 September 1723," 3:465.
[479] Edward Said ended an editorial in *Counterpunch*—which he first published in the persona of Swift—with this line. See [Jonathan Swift,] "Who's in Charge?" *Counterpunch*, March 8, 2003.

III. EPILOGUE

6. ENTHUSIASM, HISTORY, AND SECULARITY

Multa novit vulpes, verum echinus unum magnum.[480]

1) Enthusiasm and history

I have emphasized the historical roots of the discourse of enthusiasm in the post-Reformation crises of spiritual authority following from the publication of the English Bible in the vernacular.[481] I have called this the problem of popular spiritual authority—as distinct from the discourse of enthusiasm. This was, I have claimed, a real problem. Unlicensed hermeneuts like Prophet Hunt, James Nayler, and many others were able to exploit what amounted to a loophole in the medieval legitimation schema—the role of the prophet in legitimating institutional authority. Their efforts to claim prophetic authority they surely felt to be rightfully theirs—there is little reason to believe the polemical claims that such radical Reformation figures were charlatans or con artists—and to change the world to better reflect the Kingdom of God led to the construction of a discourse that diverted attention from particular doctrinal claims and readings of scripture and focused polemical attention instead on the figuration of "the enthusiast." This virtual false prophet, constructed from a number of existing polemical resources and tropes (some of which we reviewed in Chapter Two), effectively shifted the conversation regarding false prophecy from a heretical paradigm (according to which those who claimed to be prophets were considered on the basis of their doctrinal opinions) to a new paradigm of enthusiasm (according to which those claiming to be prophets were judged on the basis of their discursive

[480] "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Originally from a fragment by Archilochus, this rendition is Erasmus' "Adage I.v.18." See Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus Vol. 31: Adages I.i.1 to I.v.100*, translated by Margaret Mann Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 397. This aphorism was made famous, of course, by Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: A Study of Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953).

[481] I have focused on England in this project—albeit while drawing on some European sources. Obviously, enthusiasm is a bigger phenomenon than this country. I hope in a future version of the project to be able to account more fully for the variations in the discourse of enthusiasm witnessed in various British and continental contexts—and perhaps beyond. At the same time, I would submit that many of the aspects of enthusiasm I emphasize here are also visible in continental discourses, a fact evident from the freedom with which counter-enthusiastic polemics crossed the English channel, were translated from Dutch or German into English, translated from English into French, etc. We have had some occasion to see such currents in action—particularly in Henry More's appropriations of continental anti-Anabaptist heresiography.

comportment). The issue became not, "What do these enthusiasts believe?" but "How are these enthusiasts using language?" Not, "Look at these errors!" but "Look at this erroneousness!"

Doctrine remained an important concern, but took on a new role in this discourse. Enthusiasts were not judged according to their professed beliefs. Rather, they were taken to be signs of deeper structures of meaning which might be inferred and exposed. These deeper structures of meaning were understood as having doctrinal content of a sort. For More, the enthusiast was understood doctrinally in allegorical terms. The enthusiast allegorized revealed truth according to his own life. He prioritized himself as the tenor for which scriptural contents became so many expressive vehicles. For Locke, the enthusiast was understood as erroneously misunderstanding and abusing the basic structure of signification. He confused and jumbled crucial distinctions—above all between words, minds, and things—and claimed special illuminations that could not be validated outside of his own experience. For Swift, the enthusiast was understood in terms of a larger literary public sphere. He thrived on the credulity of the illiterate masses.

In addition to anchoring the historical account of the discourse of enthusiasm on these problems of significance and interpretation stemming from the problem of unlicensed prophecy, my account has emphasized another dimension of this discourse that previous studies have not stressed. The discourse of enthusiasm worked not only through the virtual construction of the enthusiast, a figure with a shadowy at best relation to actual dissident believers; it also worked through the imitation and inhabitation of this figure by counter-enthusiasts. The enthusiast was animated, then, by the same writers who constructed him. We have seen how this worked in all three authors. More animates David George and H.N. Locke animates Paul—a person who is not himself an enthusiast in Locke's view, but someone who has been erroneously appropriated by enthusiasts, and thus must be reoccupied and reanimated. Swift, English literature's greatest ventriloquist, animates the Lucretian materialist of the *Tale*, the astrologer Isaac Bickerstaff, and a

number of other enthusiasts. An important upshot of this dimension of the discourse is that enlightenment reason can be shown to have distinguished itself from earlier forms of reason on the basis of ironic and self-aware inhabitations of figures taken to be prophetic. The prophet worked in this way as a false totality within which one might express one's sense of one's own epistemological limitations--and thereby gain a new sort of authorial leverage over those who continued to oscillate between doubt and certainty as to whether they were damned or saved, illuminated or abandoned by God. The discourse of enthusiasm defined what came eventually to be enlightenment rationality through the knowing imitation of irrationality. Thus this project helps establish in a new way why irony, satire, and other modes of indirect representation were so fundamental to enlightenment.

One basic but important upshot of this historical account can be put plainly. It is important to study the history of prophecy. This subject is generally consigned to particular religious traditions: "Prophecy in the Old Testament," "Prophecy in Islam," etc. It is easy to see why this is the case. Nothing—except perhaps the question of the existence of God—is more basic to monotheistic religion than prophecy. All the doctrinal particulars that make up a faith pass through a prophetic tradition. Hence the overwhelming majority of critical materials on prophecy are concerned with explicating and often defending the truth of a certain view of historical prophecy. Many of these materials are invaluable for the more general study of the phenomenon of prophecy.[482] But, some important exceptions notwithstanding, few more general studies currently exist.[483] I think of this study as a preliminary chapter in a larger study of the role of prophecy in literary history, with prophecy understood not primarily in terms of temporality or doctrinal particulars, but in terms of the concept of mediation between humanity and divinity,

[482] For two examples informing the background of this project, see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001) and Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).
[483] See, e.g., James L. Kugel, editor, *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); Curry. Prophecy has, it should be mentioned, been a major focus in Milton and Blake studies. My hope would be to extend the implications of prophecy beyond such self-proclaimed poetic prophets.

immanence and transcendence, as it is related to the histories of institutional power and literary representation.[484] Such a study—which would far outstrip this particular project, and indeed the book form this project will eventually assume—would, I think, illuminate the question of political legitimacy and its reliance on representation in new and important ways. At any rate, I hope this study has helped establish the suggestive and promising nature of the careful consideration of the role of prophecy in history, and in the history of representation.

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2. Enthusiasm among the historians

Beyond that simple—but dauntingly vast—upshot, the historical aspect of this project leads me to another point related more specifically to the historical study of enthusiasm. My account of enthusiasm ends where most accounts begin—with the emergence of the eighteenth-century version of this discourse, here represented by Jonathan Swift. As Jon Mee argues, enthusiasm never stops being a key term during what used to be called "the age of reason."[485] Every decade or so, some event—the arrival in England of the Camisards, or the rise of the Methodists—prompts the resurgent fear of an imminent return to the theological-political conditions of the 1640s.[486] Treatises on enthusiasm are somewhat regularly reprinted. Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, for example, is republished in 1708, 1712, and 1739.[487] Toward the end of the century, particularly during the 1790s, many new treatises are published adapting the counter-enthusiasms of the seventeenth-century. Meanwhile, some figures—such as, for instance, William Blake—reclaim the term enthusiasm for the revolutionary spirit. For the first time, groups and individuals emerge who are happy to call themselves enthusiasts—and not in a

[484] Such a study would build on the work of Karl Löwith, among others. See Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1949).
[485] Mee, 4.
[486] Rosenberg's account emphasizes the importance of the Camisards. See Rosenberg, 41 ff.
[487] *ECCO.*

limited, polite, ironical, Shaftesburian sense. One might say, they embrace the nightmare dreamed up by their enemies. Or, perhaps, they become counter-counter-enthusiasts.

Although this study would certainly benefit from tracing this later transmogrification along the emphases it has introduced, it is worth remarking that my focus here on the early discourse helps to complicate and clarify the longer story told by Jon Mee and others. In particular, this study hopes to have shown the complexity of the stage of the discourse often treated as somewhat monolithic—the fanatical, zealous stage of "religious enthusiasm" taken to precede the more complex eighteenth-century concept. The drama Mee and others see unfolding over the eighteenth century is already present in so-called religious enthusiasm, which is already about the negotiation of the balance of self, others, and nature (a trifurcation which I think brings precision to an account like Mee's), particularly as mediated by language.[488] Religious enthusiasm, to put it plainly, is no simple term denoting excessive zeal. To reduce it to that definition eclipses the significant struggle regarding the nature of revelation, and the relative ownership of revelation enjoyed by the powerful and the powerless, which actually underpins the discourse of enthusiasm—and which has (as I hope I have shown) important implications for apparently larger projects such as the retheorization of language away from essentialism and toward the arbitrary word, the emergence of modern epistemology, the rise of scientific materialism, and the literary figuration of the relation of the virtual significatory system of self-author-text to the "ordinary" fit of word to world.

This account certainly does not aim to replace or undermine the arc traced by Mee—or, just as importantly, Jordana Rosenberg, whose account has the benefit (lacking here) of a careful history of economics. The present narrative simply provides our understanding of enthusiasm with much-needed foundational heft. In a longer version, the relation of the psychological economic balance of self-others-nature theorized in the discourse of enthusiasm might be very

[488] Cf. Mee, 15.

productively linked to the capitalist economies of psychology and nature. Rosenberg's work would be a clear touchstone in this regard—as would A.O. Hirschman's classic text, which seems more relevant now than ever, *The Passions and the Interests* (1977).[489]

But it is worth stressing one of the conclusions that follows from limiting the study of enthusiasm to the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This focus offers a very different perspective on the historical role of some ideas valorized by certain recent influential histories of enlightenment. Many scholars, as Mee's example attests, see enthusiasm as an early or preparatory phase in the revolutionary processes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. They read the enthusiast with the American or French or even Russian revolutionary in the backs of their minds. The ur-text describing this view of history is probably Friedrich Engels' *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), which saw the sixteenth century Anabaptist uprisings as rehearsals for bourgeois revolution—full of the proper anti-feudal spirit, but hamstringed by a commitment to religious (rather than materialist scientific) ideology.[490] Subtler—and exhaustively sourced—versions of this bourgeois revolution-centered approach to religious history can be found with especially force in the work of Jonathan Israel.

Israel, in his recent trilogy of books, *Radical Enlightenment*, *Enlightenment Contested*, and *Democratic Enlightenment*, argues that enlightenment has a Spinozist kernel which is taken up by Denis Diderot, Baron d'Holbach, and some of the other *encyclopédistes*, and which (in an adulterated form) shapes later French enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire and American revolutionaries like Thomas Jefferson. The process of enlightenment as he sees it was largely a matter of understanding and accepting Spinoza's insight into the unity of mind and nature—"hylozoic monism," or the idea that mind and matter alike are sides of one animate substance.

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[489] A.O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
[490] Friedrich Engels, *The German Revolutions: The Peasant War in Germany* and *Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, edited by Leonard Krieger (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

This idea undermined church teachings and the political and social orders they supported. And from this blow to the foundations of theological-political order followed everything. Israel writes:

> [Of the many] diverse intellectual currents that fed into the Radical Enlightenment [from] late medieval Averroism to Renaissance naturalism, from early eighteenth-century English Deism and pantheism to Polish and Collegiant Socinianism, from liberal Sephardic Judaism to forms of Cartesianism and the rhetoric of the English Levellers […] the only kind of philosophy which could (and can) coherently integrate and hold together such a far-reaching value condominium in the social, moral, and political spheres, as well as in 'philosophy,' was the monist, hylozoic systems […] generally labeled 'Spinozist' in the 'long' eighteenth century.[491]

And Israel sees as the fruits of Spinozist materialism nearly all modern moral values: "democracy; racial and sexual equality; individual liberty of lifestyle; full freedom of thought, expression, and the press; eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education; and full separation of church and state."[492] For Israel, the God of the Bible and all his spiritual retinue is not just an unnecessary hypothesis; the expulsion of this belief from science and politics is a necessary condition of their thriving.

This view of enlightenment is certainly well supported in Israel's books. And his sense that enlightenment can be defined by a change in ontological orientation, in his view an increasingly open embrace of Spinozist materialism, at least partially supports my sense that this shift can be characterized in terms of a movement from language-oriented to rationality-mediated appeal. But his account of enlightenment has a number of teleological features worth pointing out and questioning. Although he frequently argues that the real work of enlightenment occurred

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[491] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 867.
[492] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; quoted and discussed in Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment* (New York and London: Verso, 2012), 132.

a century before Voltaire and Rousseau arrived on the literary scene, it remains the case that the French Revolution is frequently the great endgame in Israel's analysis. Historical currents are considered as either contributing to or impeding this revolutionary event. As he puts it:

> [W]hat I am arguing is that the Radical Enlightenment [i.e. the atheist, materialist enlightenment following from Spinozism] is the only important direct cause of the French Revolution understood as a total transformation of the political, legal, cultural, and educational framework of French life, administration, and society.[493]

Many enlightenment historians have disputed Israel's intentionally bold claim. My concern is rather with the weight of the French Revolution itself in his—and, to be fair, most—accounts of enlightenment. Like a bowling ball on a trampoline, all apparently smaller objects roll eventually toward it. Ellen Meiksins Wood has discussed this tendency in her analyses of early capitalism in England, arguing that for historians of political theory like Perry Anderson and Thomas Nairn, the French bourgeois revolution, which so dramatically rejected the *Ancien Régime*, is understood to be the normative course of national development, compared with which other nations, very much including England, are shown to have failed to fully "modernize."[494] And even when the French Revolution is barely a glimmer in the angel of history's eye, as in analyses of the political-theological revolutions of seventeenth century England, it still casts a shadow. Christopher Hill, at least at times, sees the mid-century decades as an epoch of lost opportunity—a moment when, pace Milton in "The Ready and Easy Way" (1660), England had before it a chance to embrace

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[493] Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16.

[494] Meiksins Wood calls this account of British history the "Nairn-Anderson formula." She characterizes the formula as claiming that "an immature and subaltern British bourgeoisie […] suffered a failure of nerve in the face of the French Revolution and never carried through the modernizing project triumphantly effected by the French bourgeoisie in its consolidation of a modern nationhood." See Meiksins Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism: An Historical Essay on Old Regimes and Modern States* (New York and London: Verso, 1995), 29.

radical republican governing ideals like those of the more fully realized revolution of France, but balked.[495]

The primary problem with understanding English history through the skein of the French Enlightenment is that this tends to distort the very different role religion plays in each country's revolutionary history. In France, anti-clericalism and enlightenment are frequently, if not so often as Israel assumes, parallel forces. This is far from the case in England. In the English context, the arguments and philosophical innovations that look most "enlightened" from the perspective of the long eighteenth century often begin as religiously motivated interventions into a deeply complicated tangle of post-Reformation Christianities. If later enlightenment figures like David Hume (who is hardly Spinozist or democratic, by the way) are clearly critical of the Church of England—and indeed of all churches, established or not—the earlier figures I have considered in this project, including Henry More and Jonathan Swift, were either ordained members or else devout defenders of this Church. (The figure who does not fit so neatly into the Church of England, John Locke, is also intensely devout; indeed, like his good friend Isaac Newton, he is led into heterodoxy by piety rather than skepticism.) As I have shown, these thinkers do much to create the conditions of later enlightenment thought. More and Swift describe the body as merely material—although, significantly, all bodies so described are heterodox bodies. Thomas Boyle and Thomas Sprat (two thinkers who would figure in a longer version of this project) treat nature as mechanical—although they do this to honor the creator and preserve divine revelation from natural philosophical speculators armed with no scientific instruments other than the Bible. John Wilkins and John Locke imagine language as an immanent system of empirical signification rather

[495] This sense of lost potential is evident in moments like this: "There were, we may oversimplify, two revolutions in mid-century England. The one which succeeded established the sacred rights of property (abolition of feudal tenures, no arbitrary taxation), game political power to the propertied (sovereignty of Parliament and common law, abolition of prerogative courts), and removed all impediments to the triumph of the ideology of the men of property—the protestant ethic. There was, however, another revolution which never happened, though from time to time it threatened. This might have established communal property, a far wider democracy in political and legal institutions, might have disestablished the state church and rejected the protestant ethic." Hill, 15.

than an immediate transcendent link to God—although they do so in order to quell controversy between Christians and promote common belief in God.

Although it might seem that Christianity works for these thinkers as a ladder that history would kick away, these motives matter. Not only does clarifying this theological context help to give a clearer sense of the origins of enlightenment in England, and usefully complicate the narrative that would see England post-1660 or post-1688 as a nation tired of religious quarreling and in the mood to embrace secularism—it also suggests the extent to which enlightenment ideas emerged precisely to manage and limit the power and authority available to a variety of popular voices in the course of the long English Reformation. Enlightenment in England, to put it bluntly, is a project of population management.[496] And enlightenment, not only in the English-speaking world but more widely as well, has never completely lost this character. The now commonsensical opposition of religion and science, reason and faith, has tended to mask a history of theological-political gamesmanship whereby the rules of prophetic power were changed precisely when and precisely because they were theoretically democratized.

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3. Secularity

As these reflections suggest, this is clearly a project centrally concerned with the changing shape of the theorization of religion in the humanities. It is important to articulate how I see my conclusions in relation to this important field of current academic discourse. These thoughts should serve to bridge the historical side of my project and the conceptual side, to which I will turn in the section that follows.

As is well known, since 9/11 a number of prominent scholars—among them Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood, Charles Taylor, Michael Warner, and Judith Butler—have registered

[496] Cf. Colin Jager, *Unquiet Things: Secularism in the Romantic Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

dissatisfaction with the paradigm opposing religiosity and secularity.[497] Secularity, as these thinkers see it, is not the opposite of religion, nor is it the absence of religion. It is, rather, the dominant instantiation of a particular religious perspective, linked above all to Protestantism. Warner expresses this perspective while usefully qualifying it: "It is often said that liberal secularism is a religion: it is Protestant Christianity. It would be more precise to say it is the metareligious understanding of post-Calvinist Protestantism, generalized as an understanding of religion per se."[498] In other words, the concept of religion put forth by the secularist perspective is derived from a set of debates and concerns peculiar to Protestant religious history. When secularism "rejects" religion, it does so in a specific religiously inflected conceptual vocabulary—in a way shaped, therefore, by the very religious history that it appears to renounce. Hence one does well to retranslate secular schema into religious terms -- to see such schema as responding to and contoured by now-silent cultural energies.

The present study clearly reinforces many of the findings of these scholars. The history of debates over the nature of prophecy—which are, at bottom, debates regarding the structure of divine-human relations, and (as I've suggested) policing the relative intelligibility of various religious perspectives—shows the emergence of secularity and the process of secularization to have been violent, difficult, and concerted. It has not been a process of simple advancement, where the secular banishes the religious through rigorous logic and reasoning, and where Western science is conceived of as a "candle in the dark" in a "demon-haunted world," to borrow Carl Sagan's evocative phrases.[499] It is a process of polemical figuration. Some religious voices are

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[497] See, e.g., Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2007); Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, edited by Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Talal Asad and Wendy Brown, *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Infury, and Free Speech* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[498] Michael Warner, "Is Liberalism a Religion?" in Hent de Vries, ed., *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 612-13.

[499] Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997).

muted in this process. Others are amplified—often, as I have shown, through skillful imitations at one reflexive remove of the false prophetic figures banished from civilized discourse.

Thus this project supports many of the conclusions put forth by Asad and others. But at the same time, this project complicates some aspects of the scholarship on secularity. For one thing, as I have suggested, one cannot link secularism with Protestantism without further explanation. Theorists of secularity and secularization, from Weber forward, have tended to treat Protestantism as a uniform movement promoting salvation by faith alone as determined through a personal encounter with the evidence of scripture, and secularism as the detheologized or disenchanted wing of this movement. Many scholars—even, as Warner's above quotation suggests, very careful ones—do likewise. This is understandable; secularism is unimaginable without the long and complex movement known as the Protestant Reformation and the various reactions to it. But at the same time, Protestantism must be seen as a sphere of profound disputation—not only with Catholicism, but within itself. Secular categories—in particular, as I have suggested, the distinct categories of nature, self, and society formed in the process of rationalization—result not from any Protestant consensus, but from a history of polemical and at times violent struggle. These categories emerge from a struggle over the largest terms of representation—regarding the fit of world and word, divinity and humanity. Secularity, then, is a sphere of procedural disputes regarding the correct way to decipher God's will. The foregoing analysis proposes not to forget this dimension or leave it behind in pursuing the philosophical and literary questions to which this struggle gives rise.

In a roundabout way, keeping these dimensions of struggle and process in mind lends this study a perspective on secularity that has, around its critical center, sympathetic edges. (The centrality of Habermas for this project must have helped prepare such an admission.) Secularity is not a monolithic force. It is not uniform. As such, it cannot easily be reduced to its worst, most violent effects in the world—even if it remains extremely important to analyze the far from

neutral influence secular forces have had on the world. And its intellectual architects have to be understood as having had their reasons for rationalizing the world. The preceding chapters, then, have not attempted to denigrate Henry More, John Locke, and Jonathan Swift, even as they notice certain patterns and polemical strategies shared by these thinkers in their efforts to demolish "enthusiasm" while occupying provisionally enthusiastic positions of their own. In sum, this project, in a way that is perhaps unusual, 1) has sought to respect the critical positions on secularity that have emerged in recent years and to offer those theses a more detailed and concrete purchase on the histories of ideas and of literary representation via an emphasis on the importance and nature of prophecy in the constitution of modern reason and the shape of social, political, and economic discourse; while, at the same time, 2) it has sought to understand the forces driving secularization and the rise of secularity as though from within, as urgently felt and rationally motivated.

This mixed perspective on secularity follows in part from an acknowledgment that the sort of historical-critical work of which this project is an example is itself self-evidently secular. It is indebted to the tradition of dividing the world into discrete but related realms—self, society, nature—and analyzing the interaction of these realms. This is an acknowledgement usually missing, I think, in the academic work that problematizes the secular—while, in a roundabout way, perpetuating it. A simple way of putting this conclusion is this: I have stressed the problems involved in the rise of secularity and the rationalization of society. At the same time, I cannot see how the categories distinguished by rationalization could be, as it were, abandoned, or discarded, as Bruno Latour seems sometimes to wish to do. I have hoped here to make them visible and available for further thinking.

Thus the present account hopes to have helped trace to the problem of prophecy the orderly confusion of the modern world—in which, as Latour so often laments, science, law, and expressivity are theoretically sundered, even as we suffer financial and ecological catastrophes as a

result of the practical links between these dimensions, such that (to take a an obvious and ominous example) the private consumption of fossil fuels contributes to global warming. It should also help account, in a more careful way than currently practiced in academia, for the persistence of prophecy within our apparently secular horizon. This project has linked prophecy to the ambiguous and ongoing task of legitimation—whereby institutions must draw spiritual authority from the past while denying it to those who would reject or dispute those claims. It has connected that task to the formulation of persisting attitudes toward epistemology and language. And it hopes to have helped explain why the social presence of unlicensed revelation still generates news and stimulates terror to such an extraordinary extent.

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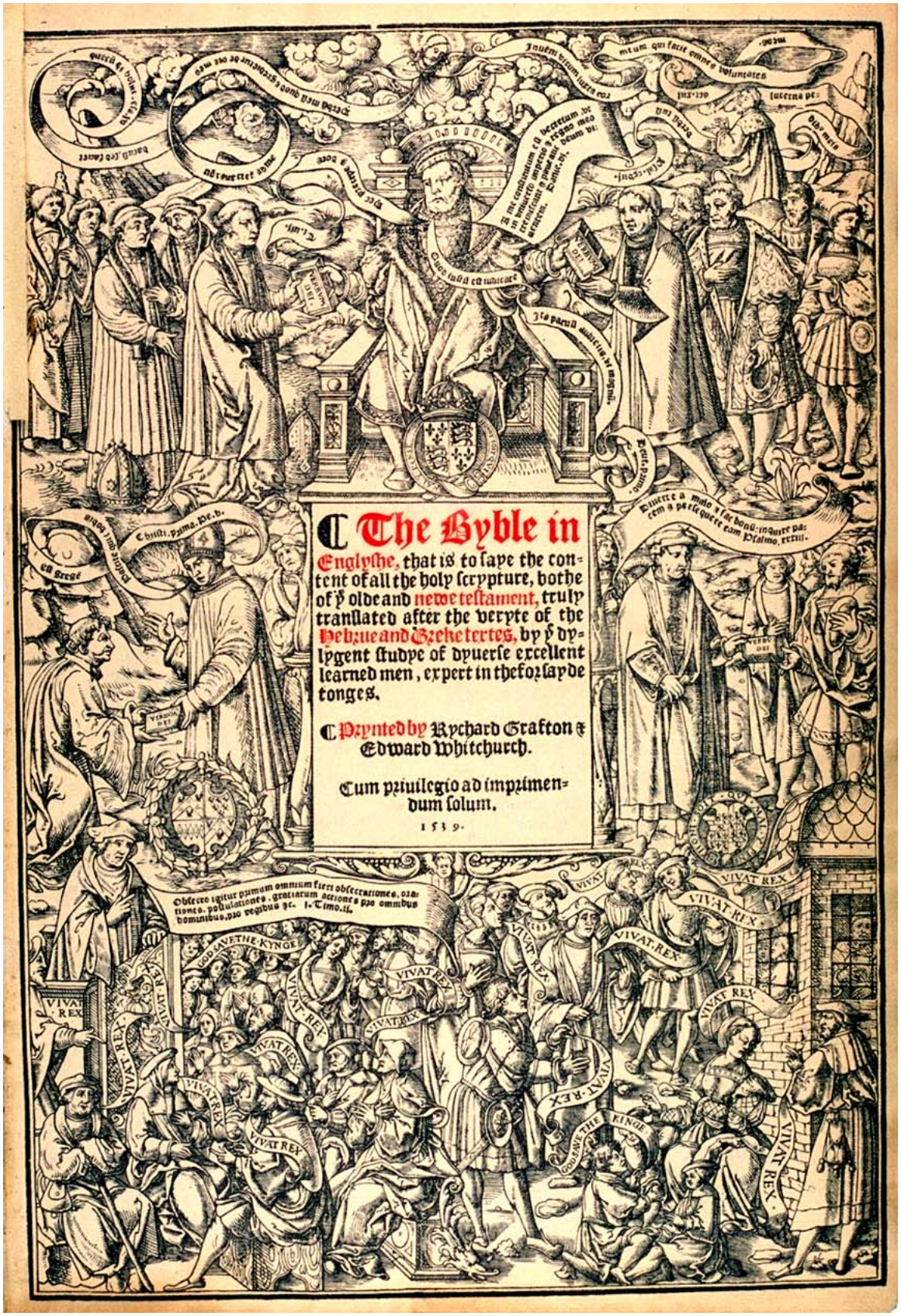
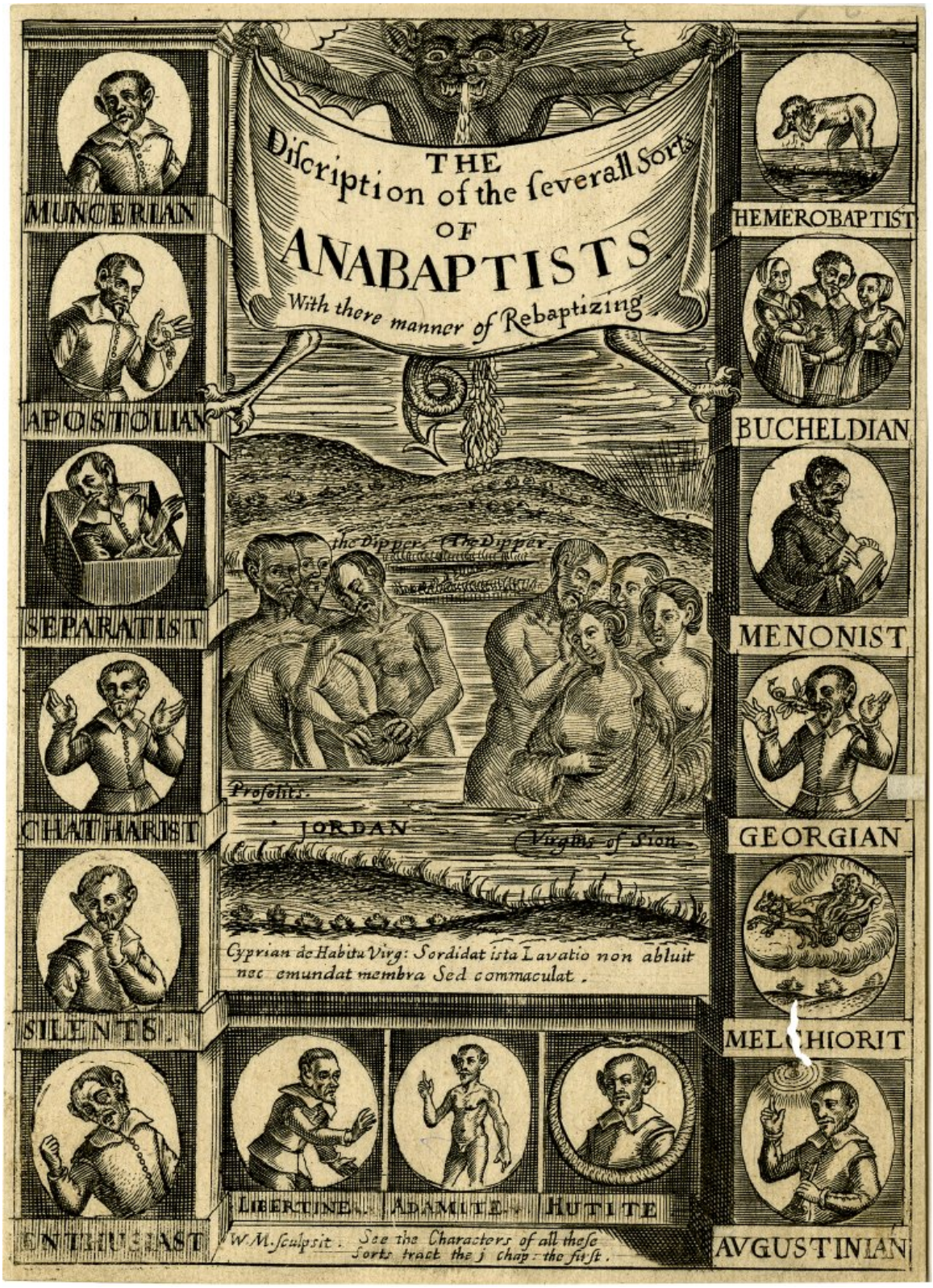
APPENDIX A – Two Frontispieces

Fig 2.1: Frontispiece to *The Great Bible* (1539). Public domain.

Fig 2.2: Engraved frontispiece to Daniel Featley, *Katabaptistai kataptysoi. The Dippers Dipt, or, The Anabaptists Duck'd and Plung'd over Head and Eares* (London, Nicholas Bourne, 1645). Image from the British Museum website. Used under a Creative Commons license.


¶ The Byble in
Englyshe, that is to saye the content of all the holy scrypture, bothe of ỹ olde and newe testament, truly translated after the verye of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by ỹ dylygent studye of dyuerse excellent learned men, expert in the forsayde tonges.
¶ Prynted by Rychard Grafton & Edward Whitchurch.
Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum.
1539.
VIVAT REX
GOD SAVE THE KYNGE


THE
Discription of the severall Sorts
OF
ANABAPTISTS.
With there manner of Rebaptizing.
MUNCERIAN
APOSTOLIAN
SEPARATIST
CHATHARIST
SILENTS.
ENTHUSIAST
HEMEROBAPTIST
BUCHELDIAN
MENONIST
GEORGIAN
MELCHIORIT
AUGUSTINIAN
the Dipper
the Dipper
Profelits.
JORDAN
Virgins of Sion
Cyprian de Habitu Virg: Sordidat ista Lavatio non abluit nec emundat membra Sed commaculat.
LIBERTINE.
ADAMITE.
HUTITE
W.M. sculpsit. See the Characters of all these Sorts tract the 3 chap: the first.

Appendix B: The frequency and percentage-to-total publications of "Enthusias*" in Seventeenth-Century English: A search conducted through *EEBO*, Dec. 2, 2013

1600-1609: 50 hits in 23 records (2.17 hits/record) / 4,140 total records (0.005%)

1610-1619: 33 hits in 25 records (1.32 hits/record) / 4,739 total records (0.005%)

1620-1629: 80 hits in 41 records (1.95 hits/record) / 5,430 total records (0.007%)

1630-1639: 172 hits in 44 records (3.9 hits/record) / 6,114 total records (0.007%)

1640-1649: 246 hits in 135 records (1.82 hits/record) / 22,192 total records* (0.006%)

1650-1659: 916 hits in 263 records (3.48 hits/record) / 12,914 total records (0.02%)

1660-1669: 705 hits in 201 records (3.5 hits/record) / 11,320 total records (0.017%)

1670-1679: 1,137 hits in 265 records (4.29 hits/record)** / 11,315 total records (0.023%)

1680-1689: 1,174 hits in 422 records (2.78 hits/record) / 18,247 total records (0.023%)

1690-99: 1,092 hits in 407 records (2.68 hits/record) / 15,554 total records (0.026%)

*The collapse of the Star Chamber in 1641 led to a de facto end of censorship. This permitted a vast and sudden increase in publication. The Licensing Order of 1643, against which Milton wrote *Areopagitica*, reinstated most of the censorship practices of the Star Chamber under a Parliamentarian rather than a Royalist aegis.

**This sudden jump in frequency probably reflects the flood of anti-Catholic publications addressing the Popish Plot (1678-81).

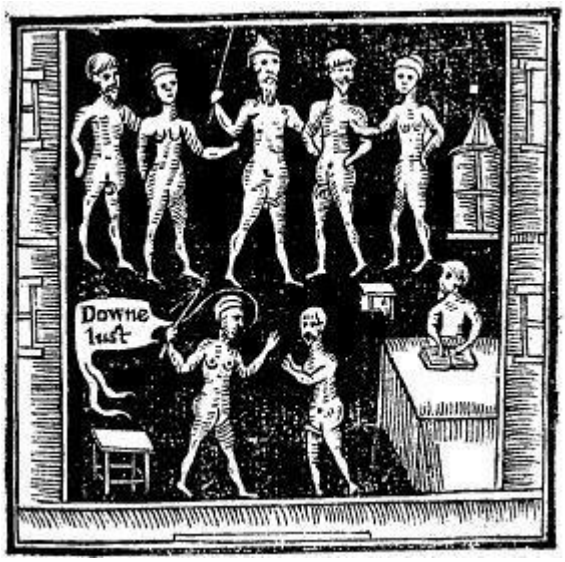
Appendix C: Recycled woodcuts of dissenting preachers in the 1640s and 50s

1. Tub Preacher

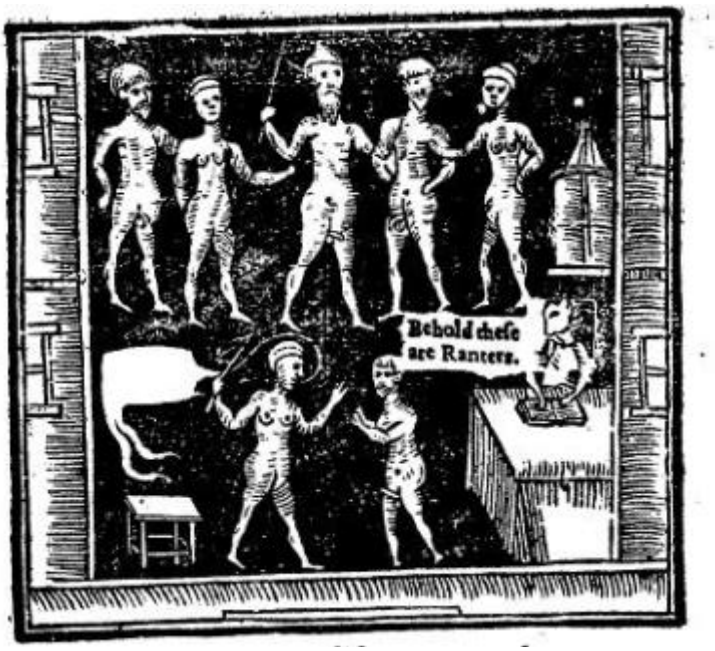
[John Taylor, *A Swarme of Sectaries* (London, 1641).]

[John Taylor, *A tale in a tub, or, A tub lecture as it was delivered by Mi-Heele Mendsoale* (London, 1641).]

2. "Downe lust"



[Anon., *A Nest of Serpents discovered, or, A knot of old heretiques revived* (London, 1641).]



[Anon., *The ranters religion* (London, 1650).]

[Anon., *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster* (London, 1646).]

[George Horton, *The ranters monster* (London, 1652).]

CURRICULUM VITAE for WILLIAM COOK MILLER

willmiller5@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Ph.D., English Literature, Johns Hopkins University, expected May 2016

M.A., English Literature, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

B.A., English and Philosophy, Kalamazoo College, 2005

DISSERTATION

Counter-Enthusiasms: The Rationalization of False Prophecy in Early Enlightenment England. Advisors: Sharon Achinstein and Frances Ferguson (UChicago). Committee Members: Jared Hickman, Michael Kwass, Yitzak Melamed, Walter Stephens.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

17th- and 18th-century British literature; enlightenment and literature; Renaissance literature; literature and religion; literature and science; literature and language theory; the novel; British and Continental philosophy; global enlightenments; critical theory.

PUBLICATIONS

"Macabre Vitality: Texture and Resonance in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Renaissance Drama* 43.2 (Fall 2015), 193-216.

"Feeling, Reflection, Epiphany: Truisms and Truths in Locke, Mill, and Dewey," *New Literary History*, 34 ms pp, forthcoming.

"Innocence after Experience: Robert Herrick's Counter-Epithalamia," *Studies in Philology*, 29 ms pp, forthcoming.

"Becoming Fanny Price: Regulated Self-Hatred in *Mansfield Park*." *Persuasions*, 31 ms pp, requested resubmission.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZER/CHAIR

2017: "Early Modern *Aesthesis* and Political Economy," MLA 2017. Panelists: Richard Halpern (NYU), Rayna Kalas (Cornell), Benjamin Parris (Haverford College).

2016: "What Was a Miracle"? ASECS 2016, Pittsburgh. Panelists: Bridget Donnelley (UNC-Chapel Hill), Sophie Gee (Princeton), Suzanne Taylor (UChicago)

2016: "Sacred Values: New Perspectives on Religion and Political Economy," MLA 2016, Austin. Panelists: Katherine Ding (UC-Berkeley), Katarina O'Briain (JHU), Maggie Vinter (Case Western)

2013: *ELH* Colloquium, John Guillory (NYU), Johns Hopkins University

INVITED TALKS

2016: "Swift's Enthusiasms," University of Rochester

2015: "Enthusiasm and the Secular Self," Albion College, MI

CONFERENCE PAPERS

2016: "Jane Austen's Evils," ASECS, Pittsburgh

2015: "Smithfield's Ghosts: The Secular Experience of Urban Space," NEASECS, Trinity College, CT

2015: "Between Reason and the Senses: Prophecy and the Imagination in the Cambridge Platonists," Religious Ideas and Scientific Thought, McGill University

2015: "The Asymptomatic Enthusiast: Henry More Reads David George," ACLA, Seattle

2014: "Swift's Lucretian Logos," Journal Club Talk, Johns Hopkins University

2014: "Inventing the Enthusiast: Swift, Hume, and the Literary Memory of Post-Revolutionary England," NEASECS, Syracuse University

2014: "From 'Heresy' to 'Enthusiasm' in Late Seventeenth-Century England," International Society for Heresy Studies, NYU

2012: "Dr. Johnson, Sophist," NEASECS, Wesleyan College

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

"Enlightenment and Revelation," Spring 2016, JHU

This upper-level course considers the role of revelation, whether understood in terms of inspiration, prophecy, divination, or meditation, in global enlightenment movements. Readings include Buddhist scriptures, Spinoza, Cavendish, Hume, and Malcolm X.

"Freshman Seminar: Prophecy after Science," Fall 2015, JHU

This course surveys the persistent importance of prophecy for representing changing conceptions of nature and selfhood. Authors include Sophocles, Shakespeare, Bacon, Diderot, Blake, Mary Shelley, and Octavia Butler.

"Friends and Enemies in Jane Austen," Summer 2015, JHU

This course considers representations of friendship and enmity in Austen's novels, linking these to the social history of the novel. Additional authors include Burney, Inchbald, Johnson, and Radcliffe.

"Prophecy after Science," Fall 2014, JHU

An upper-level version of the above course. Additional authors include Descartes, Milton, and Austen.

"What Is Tragedy?" Summer 2014, JHU

A survey of the history of tragic drama from Aeschylus to the present. Authors include Shakespeare, Racine, Lorca, and Beckett.

"Welcome to a Strange New Place," Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2013, Spring 2015, JHU

This first-year writing course focuses on representations of wonder in coming-of-age and utopian literature and film. Swift, Carroll, Kafka, and Miyazaki.

Teaching Assistant

"The Bible as Literature," Fall 2014, JHU; "Introduction to Film," 2013-present, JHU; "The Nineteenth-Century British Novel," Spring 2011, JHU (Lecture on *Adam Bede*); "Shakespeare: Then and Now," Fall 2010, JHU (Lecture on *King Lear*); "Masterworks of the English Language," 2007-2009, UT-Austin

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Dean's Prize Fellowship, JHU, 2015; MLA Travel Fellowship, MLA, 2015; Preparing Future Faculty Training Academy Certificate, JHU 2014; Dean's Teaching Fellowship, JHU, 2014; Donovan Fellowship, JHU, 2009-2013; Teaching Fellowship, UT-Austin, 2007-2009; Phi Beta Kappa, 2005; Departmental Honors and Thesis Honors, Kalamazoo College, 2005; Senior Prize for Music Performance, Kalamazoo College, 2005; Newberry Library Fellowship, 2004 (Thesis, "Natural Normativity in Word-of-Mouth Ballads")

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS/EMPLOYMENT

Managing Editor, *ELH: English Literary History*, 2012-present (initial review, article scheduling, correspondence for the journal); Writing Center Tutor and Shift Leader, Fall 2012, Spring 2013; Faculty Research Assistant, Johns Hopkins, 2010-2011; Assistant Reference Librarian, Sterling Library, Yale University, 2005-2006

NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Film Critic, *Baltimore City Paper*, 2014-2015; Case Editor, Connecticut Department of Children and Families, 2006-2008 (collected and prepared testimony for child custody decisions); Instructor of English, Aix-en-Provence, France, 2006-2007; Freelance Writer and Editor, 2005-2008 (created and edited content for online publications)

GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

Renaissance Reading Group, 2009-present; JHU Human Rights Working Group, 2010-present; Circles of Voices, 2015-present; 20th-Century Capitalism Reading Group, 2011-2013; Feminism and Queer Theory Reading Group, 2011-2012; Hopkins Graduate Film Society, 2010-2012

ADDITIONAL INTERESTS

Music (guitar, piano, voice, drums, violin); film; creative writing

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Comparative Literature Association; American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; Modern Language Association

LANGUAGES

French; German (reading with dictionary); Latin (reading with dictionary)

REFERENCES

Sharon Achinstein, Sir William Osler Professor of English, JHU (sachins1@jhu.edu)

Frances Ferguson, Chair and Ann L. and Lawrence B. Buttenwieser Professor of English, University of Chicago (ferguso1@uchicago.edu)

Patricia Kain, Director and Teaching Professor, the Expository Writing Program, JHU (kain@jhu.edu)

Jonathan Kramnick, Maynard Mack Professor of English, Yale University (jonathan.kramnick@yale.edu)